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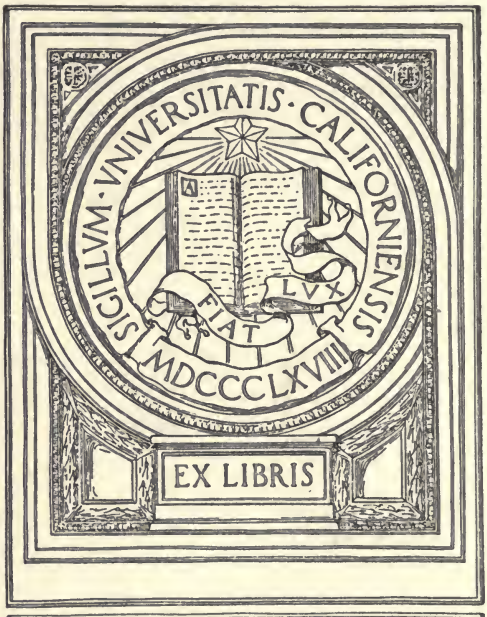

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Margaret Collett
1829

THE CHELSEA PENSIONERS.

VOL. I.

In the Press.

THE COUNTRY CURATE.

A SERIES OF TALES,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THE SUBALTERN, AND CHELSEA PENSIONERS.

LONDON.
PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

THE

CHELSEA PENSIONERS.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE SUBALTERN."

He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is named!
Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
But he 'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day.—KING HENRY V.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1829.

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INTRODUCTION.

It was on a beautiful morning in June, in the year 18—, that I sallied forth from the gate of ——— College, Oxford, for the purpose of making a tour through certain of the midland counties of England, which, from a variety of circumstances not necessary to be detailed, I had hitherto enjoyed no opportunity of visiting. My mode of travelling was one which I would venture strongly to recommend to all such as have abundance of time at their command, and are desirous of making the most of it. I journeyed on foot, with a fishing-rod in my hand, a basket, containing a change of necessaries, at my back, and a volume of Shakspeare in my pocket; and my sole companion was the sagacious and faithful dog, which had so long

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and through so many strange scenes followed my fortunes. Thus equipped and thus attended, I felt that scarcely any maladventure which might fall in my way was likely to inconvenience me; whilst I anticipated, as the sequel proved, not on mistaken grounds, a great deal of enjoyment, as well as some instruction from the excursion.

I passed through the seat of learning just as the first rays of the sun were lighting up its spires and domes, and gilded minarets, causing a very gush of glory to be shed over a scene which is never beheld to greater advantage than when in repose. There was a solemn silence in college and hall, as if a plague had recently swept them of their inmates. The solitary lamp of the student, and the blazing chandeliers of the wassailer, were alike extinguished; and the low mouthing of Greek, and the voice of riot and revelry, had equally subsided into absolute stillness. The noble high street, which but twelve hours ago seemed alive with gay loungers, was now empty; my own footsteps were echoed back upon my ear as I traversed Carfax; and in Corn Market and St.

Giles's, the faintest symptoms of life were not yet beginning to be exhibited. So perfect, indeed, was the silence, and so complete the appearance of desolation, that it would have required but a slender exertion of fancy to induce the persuasion, that the legends of the East were realized, and that I was an isolated wanderer in a city of palaces, from which some magic power had removed all living things, leaving things inanimate in their original splendour.

If the reader has ever beheld Oxford under circumstances similar to those just described, he will readily understand me when I say, that the scene stirred up feelings, such as it were no easy task to delineate, however keenly they may be felt. A thousand imaginings came upon me of times gone by,—of the great, and the good, and the pious, whom these walls had sheltered, and who under the sacred shadow of these roofs, had laid the foundation of a renown, which shall endure long after both walls and roofs have crumbled into ruins. Nor were other and no less interesting associations wanting. My own academic career was too recently

closed not to have left a crowd of college recollections fresh in my memory,—of friends with whom I had spent many happy hours, some of them resting quietly in their nameless graves, others scattered to the four winds and bustling their way through the world; whilst something like an effort to pierce the mists of futurity, and to speculate upon the probable destinations of such as still "haunted Magdalen's hallowed grove," could not be suppressed, though it obtruded itself unbidden. Speculations like the latter, are not, as every body knows, very friendly to the exuberance of animal spirits, which usually marks the commencement of an expedition avowedly pleasurable. Nor were they without their accustomed influence on the present occasion. As they crowded upon me, I became, sorely against my will, conscious of a feeling not very common with me,—a melancholy, partaking largely of the character of discontent; and I quickened my pace in consequence, with the design of freeing myself, as speedily as possible, from the presence of objects which had called it into operation.

A few minutes' walk at a brisk rate suf-

ficed for the accomplishment of this design. Baliol, St. John's, and the Observatory, were each passed in succession; and I soon found myself trudging along the smooth and open road that leads to Woodstock. In a moment, every trace of sombre and serious thought was obliterated. I looked round upon a smiling and fertile country;—upon green fields and neat hedges, groves in full leaf, and the silver Isis rolling his classic stream between banks covered with the richest verdure; whilst I listened to a flood of nature's sweetest music, poured from thousands of tiny throats, and pealing as it were, in full chorus, up to the gates of heaven. Every thing seen, and heard, and felt, was calculated to elevate and excite the mind. The air was cool and refreshing; the dews of the preceding night hung upon the boughs and leaves like sparkles of quicksilver, at the same time that they kept the dust, which without their intervention would have annoyed, from moving; whilst numerous flocks of sheep, scattered through the adjoining meadows, were cropping their early repast to the ceaseless tinkling of their own bells. All

these varied objects combined to disperse in an instant, whatever of melancholy, or even serious thought, had hitherto oppressed me; and I pushed forward, alive only to feelings of the purest enjoyment, bodily as well as mental.

As I am not going to try the patience of the reader, by bringing before him the minute details of a journey, which, though exceedingly agreeable at the moment, produced but few events worthy of record; it will be sufficient if I inform him, that having passed through Woodstock, breakfasted at a lonely inn by the way-side, and spent the night at a village, the name of which I have forgotten, I arrived, about noon on the following day, at Stratford: beautiful in itself, and beautifully situated upon the Avon; but deriving its chief attraction from being the birth-place of the greatest genius whom England, or perhaps the world, has produced. It will readily be believed that I visited the house shown as the early residence of Shakspeare, with the reverence of an idolater entering the palace of his God; and that not all the absurdity of his female representative, which was not tri-

fling, could excite more than a passing thought, unworthy of the place. From thence I took the road to Warwick Castle, inspecting with a curious eye that most perfect specimen of baronial grandeur; after which, I prepared to penetrate as far as Birmingham, Lichfield, and Stafford. But before I succeeded in reaching the nearest of these points, certain events befell, of which it will be necessary to give some account; because to these the reader is indebted for the existence of the volumes now submitted to his perusal.

It is not my ordinary practice, when travelling on foot, to follow the King's highway very faithfully; nor was I more particular in the selection of my path after I quitted Warwick, than on other occasions: on the contrary, I took a direction so as to ascend the course of the river, casting a line into each promising stream and pool as I approached it, and loitering my time away, or turning it to account, in proportion as my sport happened to be attractive, or otherwise. I was thus employed, a large hamlet lying at no great distance a-head, when a gen-

teel-looking man, apparently about sixty years of age or upwards, approached me. Like myself, he was equipped in the garb of a sportsman, with a rod and basket, the latter evidently not empty; and as his face was turned down the stream, it was easy to perceive that he was not, as yet, weary of his employment. All the world knows that there is no class of men more friendly disposed, or more communicative concerning the business of the day, than anglers; whose occupation, indeed, draws them one towards another with chords of the finest sympathy. The stranger was not different in these respects from other brethren of the hook and line: he stopped as soon as he arrived within a rod's length of me; and permitting the trout to enjoy a few minutes of undisturbed recreation among the natural flies, we entered into conversation.

At first our questions and replies were illustrative of nothing more than might have been expected from the circumstances under which we met. The stranger hoped that I had had good sport; desired to know whether I were acquainted with the stream; what flies I had used, and which proved the most killing; vo-

luntéering at the same time, in case my own hook were not supplied, to enrich me with a cast of the true kind; whilst I, as a matter of course, met his advances as they merited, and refused not the assistance thus frankly offered. But there was another bond of union between us, besides our common predilection for angling, which was not slow in being felt as well as acknowledged. A single glance served to satisfy me as to the profession and character of my new acquaintance. A carriage more than ordinarily erect; shoulders well thrown back; an expanded chest; and powdered hair, collected behind into a cue and tied up with a black ribbon: these, with a narrow black stock about his neck, and one arm stiff at the elbow joint, pointed him out as a soldier of the old school; and as I have always entertained the highest respect for that gallant and honourable class of men, I was not backward in making him aware of the estimation in which I held him. Having satisfied his curiosity as to whence I came and whither I was going, I became in turn the chief speaker, by remarking, that it was not necessary to in-

quire into his condition and circumstances, inasmuch as his general address gave very satisfactory evidence touching the gallant career which he had run. The veteran was manifestly well pleased with the compliment, implied rather than expressed. A smile passed over his weather-beaten countenance, as he answered, "You have guessed rightly; I belong to a class more numerous, and therefore, perhaps, less generally esteemed than it used to be. Yet am I sufficiently partial to the profession of arms to believe, that, even now, the country has no cause to be ashamed of the names which, unfortunately for themselves, crowd the half-pay list." This, as the reader may suppose, was but a prelude to other and more interesting discussions. The old gentleman sat down upon the green bank, inviting me to follow his example; and before long, I found myself listening to a detail of adventures, as varied and romantic as a service of thirty years in every quarter of the globe may be supposed have produced.

He had gone on in this strain for some time, enlarging, with the garrulity of old age, on the

merits of those whose deeds have long ceased to be remembered, when suddenly, as it were, he recollected himself and stopped short, just as I was about to be made acquainted with the particulars of a stratagem which caused the surrender of some hill fort, of unpronounceable name, in the Mysore county.

"You have cheated me into playing the egotist with a vengeance," said he, "and I am boring you with matters in which it is quite impossible that you can take any interest; but the fault is your own entirely. It is easy enough to set an old fellow like myself talking, but let him once get on his favourite topic, and it is no such easy matter to quiet him again."

It was now that, in order to allay the old gentleman's scruples, I judged it necessary to inform him, that I had myself served in the army, and hence that he ran no risk of wearying me by details which I could feel as well as comprehend. The announcement produced an instantaneous effect upon him. From the first his manner had been polite, easy, and familiar; now it became not friendly only, but warm and cordial. He declared his extreme satisfaction

at having made my acquaintance, inquired particularly as to the corps to which I had been attached, professed himself acquainted with its commandant, and lauded its gallantry; then pointing out that the sun was getting low in the heavens, and that it was time to think of returning home, he expressed a desire that I would accompany him, in terms which I knew not very well how to reject. "Though an old bachelor," continued he, "I do not live alone. There are twelve of us in all, half-pay officers, who keep house together. We inhabit a building at the extremity of that village, which, for distinction's sake, we have named Little Chelsea; and if you will do me the favour to become my guest there, I will introduce you to as brave and gentlemanly a set of fellows as ever smelt powder, or warmed themselves at the fire of a bivouac. I promise you, too, that if your taste lean towards narratives of military adventure, it will there be amply gratified, inasmuch as the evening never passes without one or more stories, connected with our past lives, being publicly narrated; so put up your tackle for to-day. You shall spend this evening, and

to-morrow and next day, if you relish our society, amongst us; and you shall leave us whenever business or satiety may urge your departure."

The reader will easily believe that it required no very urgent entreaties on the part of my kind friend to prevail upon me to close with his liberal proposal. Besides that I really did not very well know where to look for a caravansary, there was something in the manner and appearance of the individual himself peculiarly attractive; whilst I was curious to ascertain how affairs were conducted in an establishment, of which I began by degrees to receive an obscure impression that I had previously heard something. I accordingly accepted his invitation at once, and we set to work in the instant, unscrewing our rods, and disposing our flies and tackle in their depots. This done, we turned our faces towards the village, and walked on like men who had known each other for years, rather than acquaintances of some half-hour's standing.

Whilst traversing the space between the river and the village, I obtained from my com-

panion a full account of the establishment of Little Chelsea. It consisted, as has been already stated, of twelve members; or to speak more accurately, because in the language of the Club, of twelve pensioners. These, as often as vacancies by death or other causes occurred, were filled up, as the members of other clubs are filled up—by ballot; but there were certain qualifications which a man must necessarily possess, before he could be eligible to election into the establishment. In the first place, the person proposed must be an officer on half-pay, who had served in the regular army three years at the least, one of which must have been spent in the field, or before the enemy. In the next place, no officer could be chosen unless he had received one or more wounds, sufficiently severe to entitle him to a pension. These were the great and fundamental principles, if I may so speak, upon which the Club was founded; but, besides these, there were other regulations, from which no deviation could be allowed. The proposed member must be known as a man of unblemished character; of mild temper, and gentlemanly address; ad-

dicted neither to drinking nor gaming, nor any other propensity, the indulgence of which might weaken or interrupt the harmony of the circle; and he must pledge himself to pay implicit obedience to such by-laws as the society should from time to time see fit to enact for its own management. Whoever possessed the above requisites, and was willing to subscribe to these terms, might become, on proper recommendation, a Chelsea Pensioner; and few, once admitted, were, as my informant assured me, in any hurry to quit the hospital.

With respect again to the style and mode of living: these were made to resemble, as nearly as circumstances would allow, the system pursued in the quarters of a well-regulated regiment. To each of the junior pensioners was allowed a single apartment, to a certain number of the seniors two, which were fitted up according to the taste and at the expense of the occupants; but the dining and drawing-rooms were public property, both as to the furnishing and occupancy. All meals were of course eaten together, except in cases of sickness; and the cost of keeping up the establishment,—of servants,

books, newspapers, &c., was defrayed out of the common fund. Finally, an adequate share of attendance was furnished by three male servants, all of whom, like their masters, were discharged soldiers. There was a housekeeper to superintend the affairs of the kitchen, a laundress to take care of the washing, with a couple of women to keep the apartments in order; whilst a cook, whose ability had long been exercised for the benefit of the mess of the — regiment of dragoons, took charge of all culinary matters, to the perfect satisfaction of his employers. Such was the establishment of Little Chelsea; the expenses attendant upon which, including the rent of a house and necessary offices, were covered by an annual subscription from each pensioner, of one hundred pounds. "Thus," continued my informant, "for a very moderate sum, we contrive to live as we have been accustomed to do,—in comfort, and comparative elegance; and it is no self-flattery to affirm, that we command the respect of all classes with whom we come into contact. The village tradesmen live almost wholly by us, for we pay our bills weekly, and are never in arrear; and the

neighbouring gentry, finding us neither obtrusive nor presuming, pay us every attention in their power, and treat us with great civility. We have a standing rule against shooting, except where leave is specially granted; by adhering strictly to which, we avoid all squabbles and brawls with our neighbours; but in fishing, many of us indulge; and when the hunting season comes round, several, who can afford to keep horses, partake in that amusement. Then we are great chess-players; we take in a couple of newspapers, the Quarterly and Edinburgh Reviews, with Blackwood, and the Sporting Magazines; and though we never allow gambling, either in public or private, a quiet rubber, at the rate of sixpenny points, passes away many a winter's evening. In short, Sir, I cannot particularize all the benefits that accrue from this admirable establishment, of which I have the honour and supreme felicity of being the founder; but of most of these you will soon have an opportunity of judging for yourself, for the hospital is before us."

Just as my conductor ceased to speak, I found myself at the entrance of a neat hamlet,

the houses of which ran in two parallel rows, one on each side of the high road. They amounted to some thirty or forty, generally small in their dimensions, but universally clean; and they could boast of a couple of butchers' stalls, three or four grocers' shops, and an inn, at once larger and more respectable in appearance than might have been looked for in so secluded a corner. About a quarter of a mile beyond the hamlet stood a building, of the precise character of which it would not have been easy to judge from a mere superficial examination. Had it been placed in the middle of a park, or shaded by a grove of tall trees, the stranger would have pronounced it at once the residence of some old-fashioned squire, who did not care to trouble his head or expend his money in seeking to modernize a mansion that had sheltered his forefathers for many generations. As such, however, was not the case—as it stood by the way-side, without so much as a grass-plat in front, and presented no ornament of garden or lawn, its appearance came nearer to that of a manufactory, or parish workhouse, than any thing besides. Yet, on closer

observation, it was not difficult to discover that the pile, shapeless and clumsy as it was, had about it an air of considerable pretension. The walls were newly whitewashed, the steps that led to the main entrance were remarkably clean, every window from top to bottom was sashed, and few were without the appendant of curtains. There was a court-yard behind, moreover, at the extremity of which stood a row of stables, coach-houses, and other outbuildings; whilst the fences communicating with them were all in the best state of repair. Such was the pile towards which my guide directed my attention as the hospital of which he had spoken, and to which he bade me heartily welcome for as long a period as I might find it convenient to sojourn.

My civil host was yet in the act of speaking, when a very decisive proof of the spirit which reigned within his establishment was given. There suddenly arose from the yard behind the house, a sound familiar to me as "a tale twice told," though certainly not expected in this part of the world. Instead of a bell, or gong, or other peaceable instrument,—a well-

blown bugle rang out its warning note, for the purpose of recalling such pensioners as might be abroad, and directing such as were at home to commence preparations for dinner. Whether the unexpected signal caused me to start, or whether a smile passed across my face as the oddity of the whole adventure rose more forcibly than ever into view, I cannot say; but my companion observing something in my manner different from the tones which had previously characterised it, said with great good-humour, "You perceive that we conduct our establishment strictly upon military principles. Every thing is done here by sound of bugle. There is reveillie at sunrise, and tattoo at night—the first to summon the servants to their work, the second to give notice that the gates are about to shut; and he who is not at his post whenever he may be needed, runs no slight risk of immediate dismissal. Besides, every man has his own particular call, pensioners as well as domestics, by sounding which he may be brought home from any point within the circumference of a mile; and all are required to pay to such sig-

nals the most implicit obedience. You may depend upon it, that no association voluntarily entered into can be held pleasantly together, except by the strictest attention to standing rules; and in our case these have been framed with an undeviating regard to regularity and decorum."

We had arrived by this time at the gate of the Hospital, near which several persons were lounging, in attitudes sufficiently indicative of the listlessness which usually takes possession of a man immediately previous to the announcement of dinner. Between them and my conductor a few brief words of recognition passed; but we made no pause, till having ascended the staircase, I was ushered into his private apartment. It was neatly though not expensively furnished, with a due proportion of chairs, tables, and sofas, and the walls were surrounded by a variety of military plates, descriptive of most of the actions fought in India, or during the first American war. Over the chimney-piece were suspended two or three swords of different shapes and constructions, a brace of pistols, a gorget, sash, and short rifle—

whilst the corners were furnished with walking-sticks, fishing-rods, landing-nets, and other implements of sporting. All these things I had abundant opportunity to examine, for my own toilet necessarily occupied very little, whilst that of my guide occupied a great deal of time; but both the one and the other being completed at last, the second horn sounded, and we descended to the banqueting-room.

If the reader has ever chanced to dine at the mess of a united and well-ordered regiment, he will not stand in need of any elaborate description on my part, in order to bring before his mind's eye a tolerably accurate representation of the scene which was there presented. In the centre of a room of moderate dimensions, furnished much after the fashion of a private gentleman's dining-room, stood a table, well supplied with viands, and arranged, as it appeared, for the reception of fourteen persons. On a sideboard, which occupied a niche at the lower end, was laid out a handsome but not an extravagant supply of plate, every article of which shone as if just passed out of the hands of the maker; whilst round the walls

were suspended likenesses of Wolfe, Cornwallis, Abercrombie, Stuart, Wellington, and other heroes of ancient and modern times. Grouping about the window were some half dozen individuals, whose expressions of cordial satisfaction at the arrival of my host, indicated their readiness to commence the attack upon the provender before them; whilst the servants remained erect and soldier-like, in a row, prepared to obey such orders as might from time to time be issued. Of all this I was enabled to take notice, whilst advancing from the door towards the board; but no time was granted for more minute examination, for, the president having reached his chair, the company sat down, and the business of dinner began.

It is hardly necessary to observe, that, even at this important moment, curiosity was not so far asleep as to hinder me from stealing an occasional glance at the remarkable group into the midst of which I was thrown. At the head of the table sat Major Cohorn, the gentleman to whose hospitality I was indebted for my present enviable position, and of whose personal appearance as much has been told already,

as the reader may, perhaps, desire to learn. He was the same upright, soldier-looking person at the dinner-table as at the river's side,—his outward man being, however, so far improved, that, in lieu of the fustian jacket and trowsers which adorned it during the morning, he was now arrayed in a blue coat with scarlet collar and cuffs, white smallclothes, and large military boots. On his left hand (I myself occupying the post of honour on his right,) was placed Brevet Major Chakot, presenting a remarkable contrast to the rugged veteran, both in manner and appearance. He was a soldier of the modern school, fashionably attired, with no very striking peculiarity about him, unless the loss of an arm deserve to be so accounted; and this, as the president gave me to understand, was his first appearance as a resident among them. Next to me, on my right, sat Captain Cartridge, a weather-beaten, sallow-visaged personage, whose pet phrases, and predilection for high-seasoned dishes, gave testimony that his services had lain chiefly in the East. His costume was in perfect keeping with the line of his conversation, being arranged

solely with a view to personal comfort, not unaccompanied with neatness. Captain Cartridge was confronted by a hard-featured individual, made known to me under the appellation of Lieutenant Pivot, whose stiff and somewhat awkward manner pointed him out as one who, at one time or other, had filled the important office of Adjutant. Where he had principally served, it was not very easy to determine, though from his frequent allusion to the superiority of yams over potatoes, and the luxury of iced spruce in a warm climate, I put him down as a campaigner in the West Indies. But there was no mistaking the battle-ground of the gentleman who succeeded him. Captain Section spoke much of Mount Vesuvius, Palermo, St. Euphemia, and Sir John Stuart; from which I was at no loss in conjecturing, that he had served in the Mediterranean, and had probably taken part in the battle of Maida. Then again, there was Major Blunt, to whom pyramids and sandy deserts, and Alexandria, and the bay of Aboukir, furnished ample food for conversation;—Captain Sharp, who spoke of sand hills, and sea-dykes, canals, and track shuits;—and Lieutenant Martingale, who

delighted in Monk's Corner, Catabaw fords, Blackstocks, and Cowpens.

The scenes of these gentlemen's services, it required no great depth of penetration to detect; and as to the rest, the words Coimbra, Rodrigo, Vittoria, Torres Vedras, heard from time to time over the buzz of many voices, bespoke them all as heroes of the Peninsula, and followers of the Great Captain. It is worthy of remark, that I was the only individual at table who retained all his limbs, or rather members, perfect. Some had lost arms,—one or two, legs, —others were blind of an eye,—and several, including the president, were placed *hors de combat* by stiffened joints,—yet all were cheerful and contented; affording the fullest confirmation of Major Cohorn's previous assertion, that a pleasanter set of fellows never served their King, nor bled for their Country.

Having said so much respecting the individuals who composed the party, it will not be necessary to give any minute account of the conversation which took place during dinner. It was, in every respect, such as might have been anticipated—in the main exceedingly military,

though occasionally intermixed with other topics. This lasted not only as long as the cloth remained, but for some time afterwards, no interruption being offered, except such as arose for the occasional passing of the bottle. But by degrees silence began to prevail; and then the President, after calling to order, by knocking thrice upon the table, filled his glass.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I have great pleasure in proposing a toast, to which you, I am sure, will feel equal pleasure in doing honour. I drink to our new messmate, Major Chakot; and may he continue an honoured Pensioner of Little Chelsea, for just as long a time as shall be most conducive to his own interest and happiness."

The toast was drunk with enthusiasm, and the honour done to it duly acknowledged: after which there was again silence, which the President again interrupted.

"Major Chakot," said he, "you are aware of the customs of the place, and need not therefore be told that we are all, in our turns, pledged to entertain our comrades, by recounting some adventure which may have befallen either to

ourselves, or to persons of our acquaintance. Now as the same practice prevails here which prevails in courts-martial, namely, that the junior member shall first declare an opinion; I call upon you, as standing in that light, to set an example to your messmates, by relating whatever story or narrative may occur to you, in connection with your own military service.

The President's address was followed by a burst of universal approbation, which soon subsided into silent attention; and Major Chakot, after duly apologizing for his own want of talent, began the following history of

THE GENTLE RECRUIT.

THE GENTLE RECRUIT.

THE GENTLE RECRUIT.

CHAPTER I.

I THINK it was somewhere about the middle of January 1810, when the —— regiment occupied the barracks at Braeburn Lees, that the sergeant of the day made his appearance one morning in my quarters, to announce that a young man was waiting in the orderly room for the purpose of being enlisted. As I happened at the moment to be in temporary command of the battalion, and knew that it was kept at home only till its establishment should be complete, you will readily believe that I re-

ceived this communication with considerable satisfaction, which was the more lively because of the sergeant's reiterated assurances, that to the person and qualifications of the recruit no objection would be offered.

"He is as clever a lad," said the orderly, "as ever placed himself under the King's standard, — tall, erect, well-built, and quite genteel,—indeed he looks as if he had been drilled a year or so already; and will, unless appearances be very deceitful, make an extremely smart soldier."

There was much of promise in this description, and I knew him that gave it too well, to question its verisimilitude; so I hurried off in the firm conviction that a prize was within my grasp, and quite prepared to receive, almost without examination, this aspirant after military distinction into the ranks.

That the sergeant had not overrated the personal qualities of the volunteer, a single glance sufficed to convince me. When I entered the orderly room, I beheld before me a youth, apparently not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age, whose appearance, manner, and

general address, differed totally from those of the class of persons from among whom the ranks of our army are usually filled up. His features were not merely regular, but surpassingly beautiful; his figure tall and slender, but admirably proportioned, seemed a very model of grace and manly elegance, and his air was that of a person accustomed to mix in the best society, if not as a superior, at all events as an equal. His dress too, though manifestly a disguise, betrayed here and there those trifling attentions to neatness, of which the common people seldom dream. A shabby frock coat, for example, was buttoned over a shirt made of the finest linen, and exceedingly white; a pair of kid gloves covered his small delicate hands; and his boots were thin, light, and well-made,—like those worn, not by agricultural labourers or journeymen artisans, but by gentlemen:—It was impossible, indeed, to examine his entire bearing without coming at once to the conclusion, that he had seen better days, and that to the step which he was about to take, he was impelled by circumstances of no common urgency.

This conviction no sooner flashed across my

mind, than the eagerness with which I had resolved to accept of the proffer of his services vanished. It seemed to me, that possibly the youth might have fled from school or college in disguise; that his friends or guardians might, at this very moment, be making a search after him; and hence, that to indulge his whim might involve not himself only, but others, in lasting misery. I accordingly determined to inquire a little into his circumstances, previous to my examination of him as a recruit; and believing that he would be more easily persuaded to speak out were there no third party present at the conference, I ordered the sergeant to withdraw.

It very soon appeared, that for such a proceeding on my part the young man had not been unprepared. He smiled bitterly as the sergeant closed the door, and, drawing himself up to his full height, stood like one ready to answer no more interrogatories than his own judgment might dictate. Nor did the attitude belie his behaviour: to all my questions, as to whence he came, where he was born, who were his connexions, why he had chosen the life of a

soldier, &c. he replied in one strain, and in one only ; in other words, he either gave no answer at all, or his answer was entirely without point. It was of little consequence to any one, he said, who he was; he came from a remote county, and was not disreputably connected; but where that county lay, or who those connexions were, he declined to state: in a word, events over which he possessed no control, had rendered him an alien to his family,—he was a solitary being on the face of the earth, and he had determined to enlist, because he knew no other means of earning a subsistence; at all events, none which his feelings would permit him to adopt.

On my continuing to press upon him the necessity of mature deliberation, before he took a step so decided and irrecoverable; he replied firmly, but without any thing of insolence in his tone, that his mind had long been made up, and that if I refused to receive him, he must proceed to the next military station, where he made little doubt that the officer would prove less scrupulous. Finding him in this frame of mind, and seeing that the die

was cast, I no longer objected to comply with his wishes; I gave him the shilling—he was examined by the surgeon, and being sworn in, he took his place on the left flank of the line, under the name of John Jackson.

You will readily believe that the peculiarity of the circumstances under which this young man entered the corps, rendered him at once an object of no common interest among all classes. That he was well-born, had received a liberal education, and was in many respects ill adapted to the station into which he had thrust himself, no one could for a moment doubt; indeed the whole tenor of his conduct was such as to force the conviction of these truths even upon the most incredulous. It is true, that in all matters of drill and duty he was exceedingly attentive; that on parade the most penetrating eye could detect no blot in his appointments, nor awkwardness in his positions; and that he executed his movements not merely with alertness, but, as it seemed, with enthusiastic alacrity. In like manner, his deportment towards his superiors was uniformly correct. Every mark of deference to which

their rank entitled them, he scrupulously bestowed; nor was it possible for the most fastidious, in this respect at least, to find fault with him; yet there was on all such occasions an air of reserve or *hauteur* about him, of which he was either wholly unconscious, or which he attempted not to suppress. In touching his cap to an officer for example, or in addressing a sergeant on some point of duty, Jackson always contrived to make the individual saluted aware, that the salute was granted, not to his person, but to his office; whilst of that readiness to ingratiate himself into the good graces of those set over him, which in most cases distinguishes the young soldier, he was totally wanting. So far, indeed, was he from courting notice, that he sedulously shunned it, never voluntarily coming in the way even of his commanding officer, lest he might be required to perform some office, or execute some commission, not strictly within the line of military duty.

If such was the line of Jackson's conduct towards his superiors, you will not be surprised to learn, that among his fellow-privates

he appeared still more reserved and more haughty. Of rudeness or open incivility, in the strict sense of these terms, it is true that he could not fairly be accused; that is to say, he readily answered the salutations of such as spoke to him, and never refused to do to any an act of kindness as often as an opportunity offered; but he shunned the society of his fellow-soldiers generally, as far as it was practicable so to do, and made a friend and associate of none. Numerous and frequent were the advances made to him without effect, not only among the private soldiers, but among the non-commissioned officers. The pay-sergeant of his company offered to share his quarters with him; Jackson thanked him for the offer, but declined it:—even the sergeant-major so far forgot the dignity of his station, as to throw out hints of his desire to cultivate the recruit's acquaintance. Jackson took care not openly or contemptuously to spurn the proposed intimacy, but he avoided it.

In this manner, though one of a body of eight hundred men, he lived alone. His walks, when he took any, were by lonely paths and

unfrequented lanes. He never entered the town except on duty; indeed, he generally confined himself to the barrack-yard, or to the fields immediately adjoining. On no occasion was he known to take part in the sports or games pursued by his comrades. Though fleet as a rein-deer, races were run day after day without his standing forward as a candidate for the prize; the racket-court and cricket-field were equally neglected; and of the Canteen, it was said that he never beheld the interior except once, when, being on guard, he formed one of a party sent to clear it. In short, he continued to be what he said he was when he first came among us,—a solitary being, holding no intercourse, nor encouraging any community of feeling with those about him.

Every one who knows of what materials the generality of British regiments are composed, will understand, that a character such as I have just described is not very likely to be a favourite in his corps. The privates, seeing all their efforts to insinuate themselves into his good graces fail, soon began to entertain for Jackson an extreme aversion. The idea that

he was by birth a gentleman, which had operated for a short time in his favour, was now entertained as an adequate reason why he should be made the subject of personal hostility; and the nickname of "Gentle Jackson," which had at first been bestowed upon him in pity, was soon employed as an epithet of derision. Rude jokes were practised at his expense. His privacy was wantonly and continually broken in upon; his air, manner of walking, and form of speech were mimicked, and the most ribald conversation was invariably broached as often as he came within hearing. Even the non-commissioned officers were not backward in their efforts to annoy,—or, as they chose to term it, to humble the pride of this fine gentleman. When it came to Jackson's turn to cook the dinners, or sweep out the room, the greatest exactness was required, and the most minute failing rigorously rebuked; whilst on more than one occasion, tasks were imposed upon him, such as he was not called upon by his routine of duty to perform. All this the young gentleman bore with extraordinary equanimity and endurance. Of the rude speeches of his com-

rades he took no notice. When he saw himself dogged or watched, he would retire to his quarters; and the attempts at mimickry in which those about him indulged, he either did not understand, or he despised them. So it was in his dealings with the non-commissioned officers. He performed his tasks with so much diligence, and was always so exact, that the opportunities presented to them of venting their spleen were rare; and when they did vent it in oaths or execrations, he made as if he heard them not. Once, and only once, he ventured to remonstrate against the injustice of their proceedings. Having been ordered on fatigue, when the duty to be discharged happened to be peculiarly disgusting, he reminded the sergeant who gave the order, that he had taken his turn only the day before, and that, though he certainly would not refuse to do as he was desired, the petty tyrant might rely upon a statement of the case being laid before the commanding officer. Jackson's threat was not thrown away upon the individual to whom it was addressed. The young man escaped an office of which he could not think without loathing; but

he made Sergeant Tompkins from that time forth his implacable enemy.

I am sorry to say that it is not among the privates and non-commissioned officers only, that a gentleman in the ranks is apt to be regarded with an eye of disfavour. The habits of military discipline are far from being in accordance with the turn of mind which leads a man in authority to look with forbearance upon the absence of servility in his inferiors; indeed, where there is not servility, absolute—unmitigated servility, in the general manner of a private soldier, some reason, the reverse of favourable to the person affected, rarely fails to be discovered. The soldier who is not ready to fly at the beck of his officer—who appears not to covet the honour of serving him in any capacity and under any circumstances, may too often lay his account with being put down as a sulky and ill-conditioned scoundrel; and however meritorious his conduct may be in matters purely professional, that will hardly make amends for a fault, by which the personal vanity of a superior is wounded. Far be it from me to insinuate that this is always the case; I

only affirm that it occurs too frequently, and that it is almost unavoidably occasioned by the nature of those distinctions which military discipline engenders. Be this however as it may, one thing is quite certain, that in the case of Jackson, this disposition began gradually to show itself; and that of those who either did feel, or pretended to feel, for his situation when he enlisted, several, before the first month of his service expired, viewed him with distaste.

"An extremely saucy fellow that gentle recruit of ours," said one. "He will go a mile out of his way at any time to avoid saluting an officer; and when he cannot escape that degradation, one might fancy that he was receiving a mark of recognition from a superior."

"The scoundrel looks always as if he considered himself made of different clay from those about him," said another. "What business has such a fine gentleman in the ranks?"

"I am continually receiving complaints of his ill-humour and pride," remarked the adjutant; "but the fellow is a clean and orderly soldier too; and though they speak against him often enough in general terms,

no one seems able or willing to condescend upon particulars."

Thus were men's minds gradually alienated from a youth to whose charge, as the adjutant justly said, no definite accusation could be laid; till at last there appeared something like a positive wish to catch the offensive individual tripping. Jackson, however, appeared not more proud than cautious. He was scrupulously attentive to every duty; nor was it till after his patience had been tried beyond the power of human endurance, that the shadow of an accusation could be brought against him.

CHAPTER II.

I HAVE said that Jackson, by venturing to remonstrate against an unjust exercise of power on the part of a sergeant, incurred the fullest extent of that person's implacable hostility. It unfortunately happened that Sergeant Tompkins, the irritated official, was pay-sergeant of the company to which Jackson belonged; and of the influence which the pay-sergeant possesses with the captain or officer in command, all who know any thing of the customs of the service must be aware. The whole of that influence was, on the present occasion, excited to impress Jackson's captain with an unfavourable opinion of the recruit. A thousand groundless complaints were made of him, as that he was mutinous, disorderly, unsocial, and impertinent; he was represented as an artful and dangerous

hypocrite—one who took every opportunity of poisoning the minds of his comrades, at the same time that he affected to keep aloof from them—and of whom no good could possibly be expected, till his proud spirit should have been thoroughly broken. Captain Fletcher, the individual to whom these reports were carried, chanced to belong to that class of persons whom I have already represented as acknowledging no tolerance for any thing like an independent spirit in an inferior. He it was, indeed, who first took notice of the stiff and formal manner in which Jackson saluted,—a matter which he dwelt on with the greater bitterness, in consequence of a personal slight which he believed himself to have suffered at the hands of the young soldier. Having been pleased with the cleanliness and orderly behaviour of the recruit on duty, Captain Fletcher had communicated to Jackson his desire to employ him as a servant, making the communication with the condescending air of a superior, who confers some prodigious benefit upon a dependent. To his extreme surprise and indignation, Jackson declined the proposed patronage, in a

manner which left no doubt on the Captain's mind, that he had felt the offer not as an honour but as an insult. Captain Fletcher could not forget that circumstance; it wrankled in his mind like a canker in a wounded limb, and he scarcely took the trouble to disguise his vehement desire of finding a fitting opportunity to chastise the scoundrel for his insolence.

It is hardly necessary to say that Jackson, thus situated, soon began to feel that in embracing the honourable profession of arms as a private sentinel, he had committed a great and fatal error. He was still the neatest and most intelligent soldier upon parade, yet the morning and evening never passed without his being compelled to submit to reproaches which he was conscious that he did not merit, whilst his hours in quarters became, before long, such as even he, patient as he was, could with difficulty endure. Hitherto the attacks made upon him were merely those of speech and gesture; now, however, that he was known to hold a mean place in his captain's favour, practical jokes were indulged in: his accoutrements were no sooner cleaned, and placed in order for inspec-

tion, than some accident or other befell them; and he was compelled to go through the whole process of pipe-clay and black-ball over and over again. This occurred repeatedly, without his being able to fix the blame upon any individual; and he knew the temper of those about him too well to complain of all or any in general terms. But an opportunity presented itself at last of bringing the matter home to the guilty, and Jackson only failed in taking adequate advantage of it, through a sudden impulse of passion which he had ample reason afterwards to lament. Jackson, who had been ordered for guard over-night, paid, as is customary, more than usual attention to the furbishing of his accoutrements: his belts were white as the drifted snow, his breast-plate shone like the sun at noon-day, and Day himself, even though assisted by his partner Martin, would have failed in adding any thing to the glossy blackness of his pouch and shoes. Every button on his jacket received its full portion of scrubbing, and pack, great coat, cap, and havresack, had each been duly attended to.

This done, the young man placed them all in their proper situations, and strolled out into the field behind the barrack-yard, for the purpose of whiling away the time till tattoo. Whether he had overheard some plot among his comrades, or suspected from other causes that there was a disposition to do him wrong, I cannot say; but he had not sat many minutes in his favourite corner, before he experienced an irresistible inclination to return. He obeyed it, and entering the barrack-room, beheld a spectacle which stirred up his choler beyond the control of reason. Five or six persons, among whom Sergeant Tompkins stood conspicuous, were in the act of effacing every trace of his evening's industry. His belts were already stained with grease spots, his pouch was dimmed and defiled, and his firelock itself had not escaped the polluting touch of these miscreants. Jackson's temper, which had stood many previous trials, gave way at last. He sprang forward, and confronting the sergeant, while in the act of putting a finishing hand to his unworthy operations, struck him to the ground with one blow of his fist. All was now

confusion and uproar. The sergeant rising from the floor, called upon those near to assist in arresting a criminal, who by this act of desperate mutiny, had incurred the severest penalties of martial law ; whilst Jackson, worked up to a pitch of absolute frenzy, dared any man to lay upon him so much as a finger. For a moment, the soldiers hung back,—for there was a wildness and desperation in the young man's eye, which bespoke him utetrly reckless of consequences ; but it was only for a moment. They rushed in upon him—he made a grasp at his bayonet, but failed in securing it ; and then, after a fruitless struggle, which lasted scarcely a second, he was borne to the earth. In the mean while news reached the mess-room, that there was a tumult in the men's apartment. The Captain of the day, as fortune would have it no other than Fletcher, rushed to the spot, where he arrived just as the men of his company had secured the hands of Jackson, and were preparing to drag him before the commanding officer.

" Captain Fletcher," exclaimed the desperate man, speaking with great rapidity, and under

the influence of violent excitement, "I demand justice even from you. Look here, Sir! Is it thus that I ought to stand, pinioned,—bound,—a prisoner? Is this the consummation of so many insults and wrongs,—insults which I have borne, God knows how patiently — wrongs which I could not bear, yet feel myself a man? I know that you and I entertain no love for one another,—I know that I have received no marks of favour at your hands, nor you any proof of extraordinary respect from me; but if you be a gentleman, if you feel like a gentleman,—nay, nay, if you feel like a man, order these thongs to be removed. I ask no more than this. Let me be free, that is all, and leave the rest to myself."

Even Fletcher was visibly struck by the energy of the young man's manner, and with a degree of consideration hardly to be expected from him, desired to be made acquainted with the causes of the disturbance. God help the luckless wretch who, in any situation of life, stands singly opposed to a crowd; but doubly is he to be pitied, who, whatever the cause of the quarrel may be, fills the humble station

of a private sentinel, and incurs the hostility of his comrades. Not one voice, but fifty exclaimed aloud, that Jackson had struck the sergeant. The sergeant himself stepped forward, exhibiting, in an eyebrow swollen and discoloured, corroborating proofs that this serious accusation was well grounded, and Captain Fletcher became in an instant satisfied that one course, and one only, was left for him to pursue. It mattered not a straw of what nature the provocation given might be. To raise a hand against a superior, however slight the difference in rank, is a crime, which, if committed by one under martial law, is necessarily rated at the highest; nor are there any circumstances which, by the administrators of that most rigid of all codes, can be received as a justification. Captain Fletcher's duty was imperative. He ordered the culprit to be conveyed without delay to the black hole, there to be kept in close custody against the day of trial; whilst he himself departed, to make a report of the whole transaction in the proper quarter.

It would be no easy matter to account for

the change of manner and temperament which exhibited itself, as soon as these directions were given, in the person of Jackson. His fury, which but a minute ago fell little short of madness, suddenly subsided, and in its room came no unmanly weakness, but a cold and contemptuous disdain, as if he felt how absolutely desperate was the plight into which he had rushed, yet set its worst consequences at defiance. Without uttering a syllable of complaint, far less of justification, he calmly and deliberately prepared to follow his conductors; and he smiled with a bitterness which caused his enemy to quail beneath it, upon the sergeant as he passed. There is something in the sight of a man beset with dangers or misfortunes, who bears himself well under his trials, which the most unfeeling and despotic cannot contemplate without involuntary respect. Seldom has this truth been more forcibly illustrated than it was on the present occasion. The very persons who, but a moment before, had joined so cordially in working Jackson wrong—who by their clamour had consigned him to a disgraceful imprisonment, to be fol-

lowed, no doubt, by a punishment still more debasing—exhibited all at once manifest symptoms that they repented of their behaviour. There was no shout of triumph as "the gentleman" was led out, nor so much as a sentence of opprobrium or insult cast after him. On the contrary, whilst the majority looked in silence upon the work of their own hands, there were not wanting some who condemned with open mouth the entire tenor of the affair, and expressed their indignation that a poor fellow should thus fall a victim to the ill-natured levity, to call it by no more serious name, of persons who ought to have known better. Of these speeches, however, Jackson, if he heard them, took no more notice than he would have done of their opposites had they been uttered. He proceeded on between a file of soldiers, who so far felt for his situation as to free his wrists, as soon as the officer's back was turned, from the manacles which had hitherto confined them; till having arrived at the black-hole, a sort of dungeon adjoining to the guard-room, the door was opened, and he was thrust in, to find what comfort he could in his own reflections.

In what manner the prisoner passed that night it is, of course, impossible for me to say, because it was spent in solitude and utter darkness; but we may well believe that it was to him a night of no little suffering. He knew enough of military matters to be aware, that he had rendered himself liable to a destiny against which every generous or manly feeling revolts; and that from that terrible punishment nothing short of some fortunate accident, on the occurrence of which he was not justified in counting, could deliver him. Had it been death that awaited him, though no man can look forward to a violent death without horror, still the prospect might have been endured. There is at least nothing degrading in a capital punishment, provided it be inflicted for the breach of a law purely artificial; and the culprit who feels that from moral wrong his own conscience acquits him, may meet it without shame. But to be stripped before a crowd of spectators, tied up like a dog to the halberds, and lashed till the arms of his tormentors grow weary with the exercise,—there is something in the contemplation of such a fate

which the most philosophic cannot contemplate with composure. That this horrible vision floated continually before the eyes of Jackson, there is no room to doubt; and that upon a mind, constituted as his was, it worked even more than its usual effects, can as little be questioned. But whatever his internal sufferings might be, he gave no outward proof of their violence, at least none of which any report could be made by the sentinel who guarded his prison door. The only symptom of uneasiness, indeed, which he exhibited, showed itself in a restlessness which drove him to pace his prison backwards and forwards,—an exercise which he intermitted not for the space of a minute, from the moment of his arrest, till that of his unlooked for liberation.

In the mean while there was no little commotion among the officers of the regiment, many of whom began to feel their old prepossessions in Jackson's favour return, now that he was involved in a scrape of so serious a nature. A variety of expedients were accordingly proposed, with the view of saving the unfortunate youth from the consequences of a court-mart ial

from which, should his case be brought before it, only one sentence could be expected; but his crime was in itself so flagrant, and to pass it by unnoticed, would prove so destructive of every thing like subordination, that they were all one after another pronounced inadmissible, even by such as leaned most strongly to the side of mercy. Besides all which, the command of the corps had lately passed into the hands of one who knew nothing of the circumstances attending Jackson's enlistment, except by common report, and who, educated in a school of strict and unbending discipline, would not so much as listen to any proposition that had a violation of that principle for its object. Jackson's fate was sealed within an hour after the commission of his offence. Directions were given to the Adjutant to warn the customary number of officers for duty on the following day; and the witnesses to the prisoner's violence, as well as to the whole course of the proceedings out of which it arose, were desired to attend. But before these orders could be either acted upon or noted down, an event befell which turned the attention of all into a new channel, and procured

for the recruit at least a temporary exemption from a disgrace to which he had resolved not to submit,—at all events not to survive.

We were still seated at the mess-table, and the decided steps just specified having been taken, other topics were beginning to be introduced, when an orderly dragoon was seen to ride into the yard, and direct his course towards the Colonel's quarters. For some time previously, we had been made aware that our sojourn in England was not destined to be of long continuance. Through more than one indirect channel, we had heard that the order for our immediate embarkation to join Lord Wellington's army was issued; and that a few formalities only were required to be gone through, previous to the arrival of the route. Under these circumstances, the dragoon no sooner made his appearance than there was a simultaneous rush towards the window, accompanied by a general conviction, that now at last the order so long expected would be received; and in these expectations fate had decreed that we should not be disappointed.

The dragoon was summoned to approach—the Colonel took the packet from him; he hastily opened it, and glanced his eye over its contents with manifest satisfaction.

"Gentlemen," said he, as he again folded it up, "I congratulate both you and myself on the fulfilment of all our wishes: we are even more fortunate than the most sanguine could have anticipated; I am instructed here, that the transports destined to receive us are already assembled at Dover, and we march to-morrow morning."

A shout, loud, hearty, and lengthened, followed this announcement. The mess was immediately dissolved; the Adjutant was commanded to insert no order in the book, except that which had just arrived from the Horse Guards; and each individual set off to complete such preparations as he deemed essential to his own profit and future comfort: Jackson and his crime, were alike forgotten in the excitement which the news produced, and the calling together of the court-martial was overlooked.

Nor did many minutes elapse ere the intel-

ligence, so joyfully received in the circle of officers, made its way among the men. In an instant the parade-ground was crowded with soldiers, all eagerly demanding a repetition of details, of which each was as perfectly aware as the individual to whom he applied; till the sound of voices became loud as distant thunder, or the roar of a cataract in the woods; but it was not a sound of unmixed and unmitigated joy, neither were the figures which crowded the arena, those of happy and triumphant beings alone. There were women there—some of them rough and heartless enough, God knows; but others,—young, pure, and gentle,—who read in this glorious announcement, no more than the decree which doomed them to part from all that they held dear upon earth; and there were children too,—infants in their mothers' arms, boys at their fathers' knees,—these chimed in, not with the notes of gladness, but with weeping and bitter lamentation. There may be, and doubtless are, many heart-rending scenes brought forward, even in the progress of ordinary life. It is a sad spectacle to behold the widow and

the orphans follow the corpse of their natural protector to the grave, and it is a sorrowful sight to be a witness to the parting embrace between a mother and her only son; but the arrival of the route which marks a regiment for active service before the enemy, is redolent of occurrences which are exceeded, in power to stir up the pity of the spectator, only by those which attend the commencement of the march itself.

I need not, however, dwell at much length upon this. Of the facts as they generally occur, you are all as well informed by practical experience as myself; and as nothing took place on the present occasion dissimilar to what occurs on others, your own memory, or imagination, will form a better guide than any comment of mine. Let it suffice, therefore, to state, that it was not without great exertion on the part of the officers, that any thing like order was restored; after which, the customary routine of inspection was hastily gone through, and the lots which determined the fate of soldiers' wives, drawn. But by this time, the in-

creasing twilight began to render objects obscure. Every one, therefore, whether joyous or sad, retired to his quarters; and the voice of triumph and lamentation were, before long, equally heard no more.

CHAPTER III.

WHILST these things were going on, the solitude of Jackson's dungeon had been broken in upon by a messenger, who came, not indeed to set him free, but to conduct him, under an escort, to his barrack-room, that he might undergo the usual examination, and be disposed of accordingly. In him, the intelligence which so deeply affected all besides, excited no visible emotion. He followed his conductor in silence; stood in silence to undergo the scrutiny of the inspector, and being commanded to put his kit in order for marching at an early hour on the morrow, he did so without giving utterance to a remark. That done, he permitted himself to be quietly led back again to the place of his confinement, where he spent the remainder of

the night, as he had spent its commencement, watchful, restless, and uneasy.

It is not necessary that I should enter into any minute detail of the events which immediately followed. At an early hour on the morrow, the bugle summoned us to our stations, which were assumed amidst the commingling of joy and sorrow usual on such occasions; and the line of march being formed, the band struck up, and the regiment pushed forward. In rear of the column, a prisoner, and surrounded by a guard, moved Jackson. His arms, which he was not permitted to carry, were borne upon one of the baggage waggons, and even his parade jacket and regimental cap were denied him. Yet neither the disguise of a prisoner's dress, nor the galling appendage of manacled wrists, could rob him of that bold and haughty air which he had on all occasions maintained. Even now indeed, with every external mark of degradation about him, it was impossible to behold him without a sense of involuntary respect. Not a murmur nor complaint passed his lips. With brow erect, and eye unclouded, he stepped forward at the given signal; and he prosecuted his

journey in the same silence, and apparent abstraction, which would have distinguished him had he filled his proper station in the column.

It was late in the day before we reached the point of embarkation, and no arrangements having been made for accommodating the troops in the town, some confusion occurred in hurrying them on board. In consequence of this, as well as of an intimation from the commodore, that the wind blew fair and not a moment's delay would be allowed, more than one blunder occurred in apportioning its due share of officers to each transport, nor could any attention be paid to events not immediately connected with present contingencies. A similar cause operated in hindering any order from being issued touching the disposal of the prisoner, who was conducted to the same vessel which the rest of his company occupied; and the commandant being left without authority either to try or release him, he found himself doomed to continue a prisoner till the voyage should be accomplished. From this circumstance, however, it can hardly be said that he suffered any serious inconvenience. As I was myself the senior officer on board, I took care that none

of the rigours of confinement should be imposed upon him; indeed he became from the moment of weighing anchor a prisoner merely in name. On parade occasions alone he appeared with the badge of disgrace about him, because so much was due both to military discipline and to my own character; but he took his turn with the rest in working the ship, was permitted like the rest to walk the deck when he chose, and eat, and slept, and passed his time generally in the same place, and after the same fashion, with his comrades.

We had accomplished perhaps one half of our voyage, without the occurrence of any event deserving of notice, when on a certain occasion, feeling no disposition to sleep, and being oppressed with the excessive heat and confined atmosphere of the cabin, I quitted my cot as the eight-bells were tolling, and ascended to the quarter-deck. Nothing could exceed the exquisite beauty of the scene which met me there. The moon shone with full lustre in a sky perfectly cloudless, and tinged with a long and wavering line of silver, the bosom of the deep. The breeze was just sufficiently powerful to keep the canvass from flapping to

the mast, and to give a direction to the tiny waves, which rose and fell like the gentle heavings of a virgin's bosom; whilst the quiet rush of waters as the vessel's bow cut through them, was the only sound that broke in upon the silence of the night. The helmsman stood to his post, motionless as a statue, and the watch lay stretched upon the forecastle in profound sleep. I alone, indeed, of "the many men so beautiful," appeared to live and move, and have my senses about me; and even I soon became as still as if there had been infection in the air. I sat down upon the tafferel in a state of delicious lassitude, such as the aspect of things about me was calculated to produce; and I gazed abroad over the sea, with the eye of a happy man, who is so—he scarce knows why, and he cares not wherefore.

I was thus situated, not so much lost in thought as enjoying the blessed absence of all power of thinking, when the light step of some one approaching, as if with caution, broke in upon my reverie. I turned round, and beheld Jackson standing at my side. The moonlight falling strongly upon his face at the instant, I saw that

his features were agitated, as if some powerful passion were at work within, or that he had struggled hard to subdue such a passion, without having fully succeeded. Startled not more by the peculiar expression of his countenance than by the abruptness of his approach, I involuntarily rose from my seat, and assuming an attitude almost of defence, confronted him. "Jackson," said I, speaking sharply, because without consideration, "what means this? Have you forgotten that you go at large only upon sufferance?—how is it that you break in thus rudely upon the privacy of your commanding officer?"

A bitter and a painful smile curled the young man's lip as I uttered these sentences.

"No, Sir," replied he, after a momentary pause, "I have not forgotten that I go at large only by sufferance. I have not forgotten that I am sunk to the lowest depth of degradation, so low indeed as to be at the mercy of —— but no matter. I had fancied that by you, at least, I was regarded with an eye of favour. I had persuaded myself that you took some interest in the fate of a miserable outcast; and

my bosom yearned towards you with a feeling which my judgment hardly approved. I did wrong in giving admission to visions so baseless, and I thank you for restoring me to my senses."

He turned round as he spoke, and was walking away, when, instantly recovering my self-possession, I entreated him to remain.

"You are not mistaken, young man," said I. "I conceived a lively interest in your fate when I first saw you, and that interest continues unabated up to the present moment. If I appeared to treat you harshly on the present occasion, be assured that the tone of my voice belied my feelings. You came upon me suddenly,—I did not dream of your being near; and I acted as most men would have done under such circumstances, by speaking without thinking."

The softened tone of my voice, not less than these few explanatory sentences, produced an instantaneous effect upon Jackson. He stopped short, and looking back towards me, I saw that his eyes swam in tears, which it required no trifling exertion on his part to suppress.

"God bless you, Sir!" cried he, in a subdued tone, "I had no right, humbled as I am, to expect any thing of apology or explanation from you; but the spell is broken. When I sought your presence, it was with the firm determination of making you acquainted with every particular in my history. Under what influence I was driven to form that resolution, I cannot tell; but form it I did: and had you met me thus at first I should have poured out my whole soul before you; but the impulse has departed, and I cannot, if I would, unburthen this bursting heart of its load. At some other moment, perhaps, the spell may return; but now I have no power to speak." He retired as he concluded this sentence; and before I could interpose, either by word or gesture, to stop him, he had descended to his birth.

I need scarcely observe that this adventure, abrupt and fleeting as it was, produced upon me an effect not less lively than any in which, for a long while back, I had taken part. It was evident enough, either that the poor youth laboured under an aberration of intellect,—a supposition to the correctness of which his

allusion to the power of impulses and spells gave at least the show of plausibility; or he really was, what he professed to be, the child of a wayward destiny. In either case, he could not fail to be an object of sincere commiseration to every considerate mind; more particularly when regarded in connexion with the unhappy scrape into which he had drawn himself. It was with no ordinary violence that I blamed my own want of self-possession, which caused me to check a disposition on the boy's part to speak out; nor could all the continued beauty of the night scene, though aided by my own most strenuous exertions, restore my equanimity. After pacing the quarter-deck, therefore, for some time, not without a faint hope that he might even yet return, I determined to think no more, either of the past or the future, but to leave every thing to chance. Thus reasoning, I made haste to descend the companion; and in a mood widely different from that which possessed me when I mounted it, I retired to my cot, and succeeded, after tossing about for some time, in falling asleep.

It was but natural, excited as my curiosity,

and, let me add, my sympathy had been, that I should from that time forth lay myself out for every opportunity of again conversing with Jackson. With this view, I repeatedly kept the deck, at hours both of the night and day, when my companions had deserted it; and more than once threw myself in the young man's way so as that he could not possibly mistake my meaning. Day after day, however, stole on, and he persisted in the silence which he had hitherto maintained. It seemed, indeed, that he was really the puppet of an influence over which he possessed no control whatever—or rather, that his actions sprang not, like those of other men, from volition, but from fatality; for though he had held out a sort of promise that the time of disclosure might yet come, the fulfilment of that promise appeared not to depend upon his own choice. Not that he resumed the air of cold civility, with which he had formerly treated me not less than others: on the contrary, his salutes were now given with kindness; and more than once he lingered beside me, as if struggling with an inclination which he could not overcome; but

the subject on which, above all others, I was most anxious to be instructed, he sedulously avoided, never failing to walk away as often as I referred to it. This line of conduct on his part, though it had no effect in doing away with the sympathy which had been so strongly excited in his favour, taught me to adopt a less unequivocal manner of showing it. I gradually ceased to court his presence, and returned to the habits and mode of acting which I had previously pursued.

To this system I pertinaciously adhered, no change being wrought in consequence of it in the conduct or manner of the recruit, till the joyful cry of "Land on the lee bow!" gave notice that our voyage was drawing fast to its conclusion. The land in question proved to be Cape Ortegal, the bold and precipitous ridge of which rises like a pillar out of the waters, and is seen for some time before any of the coast adjacent becomes visible. But, the breeze still favouring us, as it had done for the last three days, other and no less attractive objects were speedily discerned, and our voyage henceforth lay along a sea-coast fertile, as the most ardent

admirer of the picturesque need desire, in interesting prospects. Headland, promontory, and bay opened and shut upon us as we swept past. In the back ground were seen rough and barren mountains, intersected here and there with lovely green valleys, through which streams of limpid water made their way; whilst convent, hamlet, or solitary shieling, rising from the midst of a grove of myrtle or gum cestus, or occupying some spot more clear and level than the rest, served to remind us that the country, though apparently in no very high state of cultivation, was not deserted. In this manner we continued to coast along, till the Tagus itself lay before us; nor did we drop anchor till a late hour on the 15th of July, about half a mile from the fortress of Belem.

The signal having been made, almost as soon as we entered the river, to prepare for immediate disembarkation, ample opportunity was afforded of arranging our baggage, and we lay down that night in readiness to step on shore as soon as the morning-gun should be fired; yet you will easily believe me when I say, that few if any amongst us slept soundly. Though

our passage had been made in as short a space of time as is usually required for such voyages, we had nevertheless been long enough at sea to make us heartily tired of the sameness of a sailor's life; and to give to the most ordinary sights and sounds connected with dry land, a character which, seen under other circumstances, they could scarcely have acquired. For my own part, I listened to the hum of voices and the distant rolling of carriages, with a degree of delight such as I had rarely experienced before; whilst the tolling of bells borne off upon the breeze, sounded in my ears like exquisite music. Then there were the thousand lights which mark the proximity of a great city—lights which in Lisbon rise one above the other in tiers, till the loftiest seem to mingle with the stars in the firmament:—upon these I felt as if I should not grow weary of gazing till the return of daylight had extinguished them. Besides, imagination took wing, and carried me forward into scenes, of the nature of which I as yet knew nothing from practical experience. Now, then, my military career was begun. Now, at length, was I about to set foot upon the land

of promise to every British soldier,—the scene where, if laurels were to be gathered at all, they could not fail to be found; and the ideas which rose out of that recollection were at once too vivid, and too complicated, to permit a thought of sleep, during many hours, to obtrude itself. At last, however, nature began to raise her voice against a farther indulgence in such speculations. All the whispers of romance failed in keeping drowsiness at bay; and I made ready, about one o'clock in the morning, to follow the example of my comrades, by descending to the cabin.

I had quitted my favourite station on the poop, and was proceeding towards the companion, when there suddenly stood before me the figure of a man whom, in spite of the almost pitchy darkness, (for the moon had not yet risen) I had no difficulty in recognizing as Jackson. His air was that of a person labouring under excessive agitation, and he held a packet in his hand, which he presented to me in a hurried and abrupt manner. "We land to-morrow," said he, speaking in a deep and stifled tone; "and the opportunity which I

have sought, God knows how eagerly, will not now be granted. But though I have no power to speak, my mind has been free, and I have written the chief details of my unfortunate story; take it—read it, when a convenient opportunity offers; but remember, as you value your own peace, communicate its contents to no one. Whatever my fate may be, keep the secret inviolable;—betray it, were it even to save my life, and the same destiny which has governed me, will rule over you." He thrust the packet into my hand as he spoke, and before I could so far command myself as to answer him, he had disappeared. I was now quite convinced that the poor youth's mind was unhinged. I put his manuscript into my pocket, hardly caring whether the opportunity to which he alluded, would ever arrive or not; and pursuing my original intention, descended the ladder, and went to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE first grey of the morning of the 16th of July, 1810, was just beginning to appear, when the report of an eighteen-pounder from the flag-ship in the Tagus, gave notice that the hour of disembarkation had arrived. It was immediately followed by a rolling of drums, and braying of bugles, taken up from transport to transport throughout the fleet; and in five minutes after, the deck of every vessel was crowded with soldiers, armed, clothed and equipped for immediate service. Nor did any great while elapse, ere a numerous flotilla of boats began to assemble alongside. Into these company after company entered, with as much regard to order as the circumstances of the case would permit; and long before the sun had attained any height in the heavens, the regi-

ment was formed in column of companies along the beach.

It was but natural to suppose that at least a day or two would be granted previous to the commencement of our march up the country, for the double purpose of refreshing the men, enfeebled by a fortnight's confinement, and enabling the officers to provide mules and other animals for the transport of their baggage.

This was, indeed, the more confidently anticipated, because Lord Wellington's well-known policy induced him to spare his young troops, by keeping them as much as possible in the rear, till they became in some degree inured to the climate; but the particular state of affairs at the present juncture was such as to set all ordinary rules at defiance, and to render the bringing up of every disposable man to the scene of action, imperative. I need scarcely remind you, that Massena was now hanging upon the frontier with an army of 70,000 men; that Ciudad Rodrigo was in a state of close siege; and that the British General, with little more than 25,000 British, and about as many half-disciplined Portuguese, could bring no

relief to the garrison, being hardly competent to maintain his defensive position upon the Coa. Under these circumstances, the arrival of a fresh battalion was to him a matter of the first moment; and hence every corps which landed was hurried forward into the interior, as rapidly as the strength of the men, and the movements of pressed bullocks, would allow.

Like other regiments which had lately arrived, we were met upon the beach by a peremptory order to pass at once through the capital into the interior, intimation being at the same time conveyed, that such accommodation as the country could afford, and we were likely to need, had already been provided. In consequence of this communication, our heavy baggage, which, as a matter of course, had been brought on shore, was again sent back to the ships, whilst, a few mules being furnished from the commissariat depôt at Belem, such lighter articles as could not be dispensed with were packed upon them, not without some confusion and various disappointments to individuals. This done, the word was given to march, and we pushed forward, if not perfectly satisfied, still, upon the

whole, in the highest possible order. But the consequence of so much haste was, that of Lisbon I was permitted to see no more than a few of the wretched streets which lead from Belem to the great northern road; that at Scavem we made no greater pause than was absolutely necessary to collect stragglers; and that, passing at the same rate through Bucellos, we arrived in the evening, jaded and hungry, at a town called Alenquer. Here the night was spent in no very comfortable plight; for the lodging was miserable, and the authorities being not over and above disposed to exert themselves in our favour, our rations proved any thing but sufficient; nevertheless, on the morrow the march was resumed with the same rapidity as at first, and for an entire week we were *en route*. Thus, by dint of extraordinary exertions, we contrived to come up with the division to which we were attached, about noon on the 22d,—having accomplished a march of upwards of one hundred and fifty miles in something less than seven entire days.

We found the division occupying a line considerably in advance of the main army, with its

left resting upon Almeida, its right upon a bend in the Coa, and covered in its rear by the channel of the same river. The outposts, however, extended as far as certain scattered hamlets, half way between Almeida and Villamula; and the state of preparation in which both men and horses were kept, indicated that an attack was hourly expected. As we arrived not in the best order imaginable, the men being foot-sore to the last degree, and the officers sadly distressed for want of baggage, the General, with the consideration for which he was remarkable throughout the army, appointed us to a station better sheltered than that occupied by any other battalion under his command. We took possession of a few cottages not far from a bridge which connected the opposite banks of the river with one another, where we were given to understand, that for some days at least no service on outpost, nor any other harassing duty, would be required at our hands.

In the mean time Jackson, so far from deriving any advantage from the debarkation, had only returned, in consequence of it, to the condition of a close prisoner. Though his case had

been brought before the commanding officer at the earliest opportunity, such had been the rapidity of our movements, and so excessive the fatigue attendant upon them, that no leisure for investigating it had yet offered, and he followed the column in charge of the rear guard, at once ignorant of his ultimate destiny, and, to all appearance at least, indifferent respecting it. Several fresh attempts were indeed made to obtain for him a free pardon, partly in consequence of the extreme provocation which had led to the commission of his crime, and partly because of the length of time which had seen him in confinement. But our commanding officer, as I have already stated, was one of those who cannot disunite the ideas of manly clemency and blameable imbecility. A rigid disciplinarian, he would allow no circumstances to stand as an excuse for a breach of the great and fundamental law of subordination; and though punishment might be deferred, it never failed, sooner or later, to overtake the individual who, being under his command and in his power, set that law at defiance. Poor Jackson was doomed to become one in addition to many who received

this stern justice at his hands. The remainder of the 22d being granted to see after our own and our men's comforts, a regimental Court-martial was ordered to assemble on the morrow; and, as bad luck would have it, (for, under all circumstances, I could not but consider the coincidence as unfortunate,) of the Court in question I was nominated president.

At the appointed hour of noon, the Court, consisting of four young subalterns, with myself, not at that time a very old man, assembled. We met together in a ruinous shed, one portion of which was set apart as a place of confinement to the disorderly; and the prisoner being summoned, as well as the witnesses against him, the customary oaths were taken, and the process began. There is no denying that a clearer case of mutiny was never brought before the cognizance of a military tribunal. A blow was inflicted by a private sentinel upon his officer,—to that fact twenty persons were prepared to swear; and though the previous provocations were admitted to have been both numerous and galling, these could not for a moment be received as more than a slight ex-

tenuation of so serious a crime. Even the prisoner himself attempted no denial, nor offered any excuse for his conduct. When called upon to make his defence, he answered only with a brief declaration that his case needed no apology, for that he had acted upon an impulse which would have driven any other person so situated to a similar course. This was said in a tone of voice as calm and firm as if he had been speaking of matters the issue of which could not affect him very deeply; and it was all that, by repeated questions, I succeeded in wringing from him. The Court having listened to him patiently, and, I must confess, not without a considerable share of commiseration, commanded him to withdraw; when, each member being separately required to give judgment, all, one after another, pronounced him—Guilty. Finally, the severest sentence which it was in the power of a regimental Court-martial to award, was awarded against him; and he was condemned to receive, at such time and place as the commanding officer should appoint, a punishment of three hundred lashes on his bare back.

Greatly as I felt shocked when this tremen-

dous sentence was pronounced, it was impossible for me, upon any grounds of injustice or cruelty, to lift up my voice against it. My brother officers would have failed in their duty, had they permitted any consideration foreign from the circumstances of the case, as it appeared in evidence before them, to warp their judgment, or direct their finding; and I, as President, should have been equally wanting in mine, had I interfered with the exercise of their legitimate powers, or influenced their decision. Yet it was not without a pang of deep and heartfelt sorrow that I listened to their verdict, and proceeded, as my office required, to record it. Record it, however, I did, without betraying more of outward concern than was exhibited by the rest; and then there remained but one measure to pursue, which we all heartily united in adopting. A recommendation to mercy, expressed in the most forcible terms, was appended to the sentence of condemnation; and something like a hope was excited, that it might prove not wholly useless.

Armed with this important document, and carefully studying, as I went along, every ar-

gument which I thought at all likely to affect his mind, I hurried off to the Colonel's quarters, whom I found engaged, apparently in earnest conversation, with Captain Fletcher. This was an omen so unfavourable, that in spite of my best exertions to prevent it, I found much of the confidence which had animated me by the way, evaporate; yet I determined to show myself not less the strenuous advocate of a youth who appeared to possess no friend in the regiment except myself. My business was no sooner made known, than Captain Fletcher rose to withdraw. God knows,—perhaps I do them wrong,—but I fancied then, and I fancy now, that he threw a significant look over his shoulder, just as he was quitting the apartment, and that it was answered by a look not less significant from the Colonel; and the ideas to which the suspicion gave rise, were not very favourable to freedom of speech. Nevertheless, I performed my task; if not as eloquently as I intended, at all events forcibly and strenuously, though, as it very soon appeared, to little purpose.

"You have a perfect right, Captain Cha-

kot," said the Colonel, "to lay before me both the sentence and the recommendation of the Court; nor do I blame you for using your best eloquence in the prisoner's favour. But it remains for me to decide, how far clemency can be here judiciously exercised; and you may rest satisfied that, in coming to that decision, I shall be guided entirely by my own sense of propriety."

He bowed as he uttered these words; and taking the hint as it was intended to be taken, I withdrew, leaving behind me every ray of hope that poor Jackson would escape degradation. I was not deceived in this painful foreboding: in an hour or two after, the sergeant of the day brought the orderly book, as usual, to my quarters; I hastily opened it, and the first announcement which met my eye, was this: "The regiment will parade to-morrow morning at seven o'clock, in heavy marching order, to witness the sentence of a regimental Court-martial carried into execution."

I shut the book in indescribable disgust, and feeling incapable of supporting any society, even that of my brother officers, I walked into the

open air, without knowing or caring where chance might lead me.

I wandered on for some time, in a state of high and painful excitement, cursing sometimes the extreme severity of my commander's temper, sometimes the bad-heartedness of Fletcher, and not less often the rashness of the young recruit, till I reached, without being aware of it, the edge of the precipitous cliff which on the northern side overhangs the Coa. Arrested thus suddenly in my course, I could not fail to look around; and the scene which opened upon me was sufficient to dispel, at least for the moment, every feeling besides that of intense and speechless admiration. Immediately beneath me ran the river—a brawling and noisy mountain stream, forcing its way through a narrow valley, which was closely hemmed in on either hand by rocks of gigantic dimensions. Over the faces of these were scattered detached clumps of dwarf oak and mountain ash, which, pushing themselves forward from every fissure, gave to the entire valley the appearance of an old forest thinned by time, or perhaps by hu-

man industry, but still retaining a considerable share of its pristine character. Around me, again, was an amphitheatre of woody hills, the wood broken in upon here and there by some beetling crag which reared its bald front high above the surrounding foliage; whilst of the residence of man, or proofs of his recent labour and handywork, not a trace, from the spot which I then occupied, could be discovered. To complete the wild magnificence of the spectacle, the last rays of a setting sun were streaming over a bold ridge, which girdles in the well-known Guarda pass; and the whole wilderness was glowing in the full yellow blaze, which in this climate generally precedes the brief twilight. The effect of all this, bursting upon me, as it did, without any previous warning, was one which up to the present time I have not forgotten. In an instant, every source of care and annoyance ceased to operate; and I stood gazing about, in the full enjoyment of feelings which such a scene, and such a scene alone, is capable of exciting.

It was now almost for the first time since he put it into my hand, that the recollection of

Jackson's packet occurred to me. Blaming myself, I hardly knew why, for my inattention, I thrust my hand into my pocket, and there, sure enough, it was, just as I received it on board of ship. There could not be a more convenient opportunity, nor a place more fitting, for the perusal of a narrative concerning the nature of which I had already pretty well made up my mind; so, sitting down under an ash, I broke the seal, and began it. As I have faithfully preserved it, and have it still about me, I think it better to read the whole than make any attempt to detail its substance; for though the latter might serve very well the purpose of my present narrative, it could not convey to you any idea of the character or disposition of the writer.

JACKSON'S NARRATIVE.

"By what secret and irresistible influence I am impelled to make a confidant of you, I know not. It is true, that, from the moment when we first met, you have appeared to feel an interest in my favour; nor have I forgotten the kind and generous manner in which you warned me of the consequences of the rash step which I was about to take; neither has your marked delicacy of conduct, since I came as a prisoner immediately under your command, escaped my observation. But these things furnish no rational reason why I should disclose my shame to you; they would rather lead me, were I master of my own actions, to conceal it. I am not, however, master of my own actions. There is a curse upon me—a terrible and deadly curse, which operates at all moments of my sleeping and waking existence,—which has reduced me to what I am—a common soldier,—which has driven me to the commission of a

crime, bringing a debasing punishment in its train,—which compels me, in spite of strenuous exertions to the contrary, to stand forward as a witness against myself, and which will never cease to work upon my heart, and to shape out the tenor of my movements, till that heart cease to beat, and these limbs be incapable of motion.

"I am the son, the only son, nay the only child, of a gentleman of proud lineage and considerable fortune, in the north of England. His name it would little interest you to be told; and doomed as I am to be the publisher of my own disgrace, I will not bring disgrace upon others by repeating it. Let it suffice to mention, that the estate to which I was once heir, came into the family at the Conquest, and that it has descended in lineal succession, from father to son, from its first possessor, to him—who does not now hold it.

"Of the manner in which my early years were spent, I entertain but a vague and indistinct recollection. I remember something, indeed, of a lovely and amiable woman, to whom I was taught by those about me to look as my mother. I remember, or rather I fancy that

I remember, how she used to take me on her knee, and cover my cheek with kisses, whilst tears rolled down her own; and either memory, or the report of others,—when heard, or where repeated, I know not,—presents me with an occasional picture of the same beautiful woman, pining like one broken-hearted, and fading in her youth. Observe, that I do not assert these things as facts; they may be mere illusions of my own disordered fancy; in all probability they are so; yet to me they are at this moment as clear and palpable as the scene of my own arrest on a recent occasion, or our late conference on the quarter-deck. Whether they be realities or dreams, is, however, a matter of no moment. My mother died long before I had attained sufficient age to value her good qualities, or to miss her attentions; and I was left, when little more than an infant, to the care of my father.

"I know not how to trust myself in drawing a picture of the only parent whom I have ever known. That he was kind in his manner towards me, I cannot venture to say; at least his kindness was not so displayed as to win upon the attachment of a boy naturally warm-hearted,

or to make me forget that I had sometimes seen my mother weep, when he and she and I were alone together. It is true that few days passed, few at least during which he was disengaged, without my seeing him. Occasionally, too, he would bring me a toy; and when I was old enough to ride, he gave me a pony, on which I was permitted to scamper wherever I chose, provided only I returned home before dark. Yet was his manner uniformly cold and austere; I cannot recall to my recollection so much as one kiss from his lips; and as to a God bless you!—the expression never escaped him. No, no, no! it was not in blessing that he took the name of God in his mouth;—it was for a far more tremendous and more certain purpose.

"At an age as early as is usual in like cases, I was sent to a preparatory school, from whence I was in due time removed to Eton. Here, in the society of lads of my own standing, several happy years were spent, so happy indeed, that the impression which they have left upon my mind, can be erased only by death. Strange to say, however, the vacations, which brought to others so many anticipations of delight, were

always hailed by me with sorrow. I had no home; that is to say, no home which I loved; for though I delighted in field sports, and the means of gratifying that propensity were abundantly within my reach, there was something in the air of ———, which invariably chilled me when I drew near it. The truth is, that I did not, and could not love my father. I feared him; he was a man to be feared:—cold, austere, formal; proud of his family, equally proud of his own attainments; of a temper not irritable, in the ordinary acceptation of that term, yet easily offended, and ignorant how to forgive: such a man even his own son could not love, however much he might reverence, or rather dread him. Besides, my father was one of those whom no arguments, no entreaties, no motives, even of self-interest, could divert from the course which he had once made up his mind to pursue. Let him set his heart upon any object, and the whole world, were it offered in exchange, could not purchase his relinquishment of that object; difficulties, should such occur, only served to goad him to farther exertions. Nor was it in essentials only that this unbending temperament displayed itself; it

reached even to the most minute details of domestic life; it operated even in his distribution of his own time, and had full influence over my proceedings, which dared not take a direction in the slightest degree at variance from the channel which he had marked out for them. Between my father and myself there was not so much as the pretence of confidence. He never consulted me in any thing, whether relating to myself or others; he never spoke to me of family matters, ancient or modern; and he gave me no encouragement to communicate my feelings to him with the freedom which a son should always experience in the presence of his father. On the contrary, the little intercourse that passed between us, was uniformly distant and chilling,—like that which is sometimes kept up by a guardian towards his ward, provided no ties of blood bind them one to another, but bearing no semblance whatever to that free communion of soul, mind, and feeling, which, if it exist anywhere, might be expected to exist between a parent and a child.

"In the society of such a man, it was impossible that I could find any enjoyment, and to his

society I was, when at home, almost exclusively confined; for the peculiarities of my father's temper were such, that few of his neighbours kept up with him more than a distant or formal acquaintance. Once or twice a year a stately dinner was prepared, at which some half-dozen country gentlemen would make their appearance; but these meetings always passed off heavily at the time, and they led to no familiar intercourse afterwards. Indeed, my father was manifestly neither loved nor courted by any one. His very servants and tenants avoided him as often as they could; and when that was impossible, they stood before him in undisguised alarm. Whence all this arose I am unable even to conjecture, for of his early history I never heard a syllable; and unless something more extraordinary occurred in his youth than took place since my memory serves, there was certainly no adequate reason for it.

"I had removed from Eton, after going through the regular course, and had kept a few terms at Cambridge, when that event befell upon which the whole of my future fortunes were doomed to turn.

"It was on a beautiful evening in June, that

with feelings widely different from those which I could have wished to experience, I found myself approaching the place of my nativity. There were no pleasing recollections associated with that lonely and desolate mansion. Its great empty halls and half-furnished apartments, through which the voice of mirth and revelry never echoed, its long passages and dreary corridors, where the sound of a footstep would have startled had it reached the ear, rose with no very agreeable colours before my view; and when I considered that amid this solitude the whole of a tedious summer must be passed, I could not avoid shuddering at the prospect. I was in this mood, when a sudden stopping of the horses induced me to sit forward in the chaise for the purpose of ascertaining the cause. There was no possibility of mistaking the principal objects about me. I recognized at once the beech grove that skirted the park, and the commencement of the long avenue which led up to the mansion; but in minuter details a change had occurred, which set all my surmises and calculations at defiance. The lodge, which, when I last entered it, was more than half unroofed and in

ruins, presented now the appearance of a neat and comfortable cottage; it was newly thatched, glazed, and whitewashed, and a spot of ground tastefully laid out in cultivation lay behind it. In like manner the pillars and gates had undergone a thorough repair; the palings seemed to have been lately renewed; and the very grass and weeds which used to overgrow the drive, had all disappeared. Instead of the slatternly dame, likewise, by whom I was accustomed to be met here, a pretty country girl, about ten or twelve years old, threw open the gate, and dropped a curtsey as the chaise rolled through, with the grace of one accustomed to the office. I need scarcely say that all this excited in me no little amazement; but if I experienced surprise at the aspect of things in themselves so unimportant, my astonishment increased ten-fold, when other and still greater changes appeared.

As I approached the house, I became at every step more and more aware, that a complete revolution must have taken place in my father's style of living. The lawn, of which my most remote recollection presented no other picture than of a rough and neglected plot of grass, was now mowed with the utmost care, and tastefully

adorned at different points with clumps of flowering shrubs and ornamental evergreens. A light wire fence protected it from the approach of the sheep, which in former days were accustomed to browse up to the very windows; and a wicket composed of the same materials admitted us to a well-cleaned gravel walk, which extended in front of the main entrance. Then again, on looking up towards the house itself, I beheld that the shutters of every window were open, that the frames had been lately painted, and the glass universally repaired, and that an air of comfort was cast over the entire exterior, such as I had never seen it wear until now. By this time the carriage had stopped, and the postilion having rung the bell, the hall-door was opened by a servant in a neat morning livery; who, though manifestly unacquainted with my name and circumstances, civilly requested me to walk in. I followed the lacquey, not like one entering his father's house, but like a stranger in a place unknown to him; and truly the aspect of every thing had undergone a revolution so complete, that I almost doubted whether the case were not really so.

[illegible]

"We had by this time reached the door of the drawing-room, when the servant, as a preparatory step to throwing it open, demanded my name. I was so confounded that I could not contrive to stammer it out so as to be understood; and the man, mistaking my words, ushered me in under some appellation, the sound of which I have forgotten. I walked forward: but my surprise amounted to positive stupefaction, when there arose to meet me—not my father, but a lady, beautiful as an angel, young, elegant, graceful in every motion, with eyes that did not look, but speak—ay, Sir, speak words—plain intelligible words—dark, large, brilliant, surmounted with long lashes, which softened, whilst they took not away from, the variable expression of the orbs beneath them.—But I must command myself—so let that pass.

"In what manner I received the salutation of the stranger, I cannot tell: only I remember, that, when I made an effort to speak, my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, and I stood like one rooted to the spot by some sudden spell, or thrown into stone. The lady seemed surprised at my emotion, I even fancied that

she became alarmed, for she uttered something in a hurried tone, the purport of which I could not comprehend, and made a movement as if to retire; but before she could carry that resolution into effect, a door which communicated between the saloon and the library was thrown open, and my father entered. The sight of him recalled me instantly to my senses. I advanced to receive the hand which he held out; and in the next instant, the whole mystery around me was explained.

"'You are welcome home again, Charles,' said my father, with more than usual kindness in his tone; 'I dare say the aspect which things have assumed since you were last here, has caused you no little astonishment; yet I am willing to hope, that astonishment is not the only feeling likely to be roused.' 'Charlotte, my love,' continued he, turning to the lady, 'permit me to introduce to you my son, whom you will find, I trust, an agreeable companion at moments when I may be unable to enjoy your society. Charles, in this lady you see one who is entitled, by every tie of moral obligation, to your respect and affection. She has con-

sented to make me the happiest of men; and she now stands towards you in the relation of a mother.'

"'A mother!' cried I, staggering back, as if struck by some sudden and deadly blow: 'A mother! Is this lady, then, your wife?'

"'Yes, Sir,' replied my father, in his old tone of asperity; 'this lady is my wife. Is there any thing so very remarkable in that circumstance, as that you should not be able to comprehend it?'

"'No, Sir, no — not exactly so,' said I, scarcely knowing what I said: 'but the intelligence has come upon me so suddenly—I knew not that any such step was in contemplation—that, in short, I know not what to say, except that your announcement has perfectly amazed me.'

"'I see no reason why it should produce that effect,' replied he; 'there is nothing so very startling in the fact, that a man who has spent twenty years in solitude should become weary of living alone, or that he should ally himself with one every way worthy of his esteem and affections.'

"This was spoken coldly and deliberately,

with an emphasis of which I could not mistake the purport; yet I answered it by observing, that I had received no intimation of the intended change; and that his silence on such a subject surprised me more, than the line of conduct which he had seen fit to pursue.

"'I was not aware,' replied he in a sarcastic tone, into which he knew well how to throw the very gall of bitterness, 'that I had ever given you cause to regard yourself as the arbiter of my destinies. I have not been in the habit of soliciting your advice on indifferent matters, and should scarcely think of desiring it on an occasion like the present. But enough of such discussion—I have told you how this lady and yourself are connected; it remains for you to behave towards her as that connection demands.'

"I had by this time recovered in some degree from my agitation, and turned towards my mother-in-law, with the intention of offering an apology for the strangeness of my behaviour. She trembled violently,—whether from fear, or mere embarrassment, it was, of course, impossible for me to tell; whilst her respiration appeared to go on with difficulty, and her colour

went and came like clouds over the face of the moon on a stormy night. By degrees, however, the awkwardness of manner inseparable from so extraordinary an introduction, departed. She recovered the calm and placid air which distinguished her when she rose to bid me welcome; and the ease which marked her gestures, as well as the readiness with which we entered into conversation, soon produced the happiest effect upon me. In five minutes every thing awkward in our first meeting was forgotten, and we behaved towards each other, as persons in our situation might be expected to behave.

"It was now that I found leisure to cast my eyes round upon the apartment in which we were sitting; and there, as well as elsewhere, I saw that a perfect revolution had occurred. The ancient cane-backed chairs and sofas had been displaced to make room for couches covered with the costliest silks; rose-wood tables, richly inlaid, were scattered here and there in elegant confusion; splendid pier-glasses filled up the recesses, and curtains of the finest stuffs ornamented the windows; whilst even the paper upon the walls, as well as the painting on

the roof and pannels, had all been renewed in the most expensive and brilliant manner. Nor was it in the saloon alone that the hand of improvement had been at work. There was not an apartment in the house, from the servants' hall to the nursery, which had not undergone some change; whilst all that were in any degree conspicuous, as well in the sleeping as in the living compartment, had been entirely refurnished. I cannot pretend to describe the effect which this change produced upon me. That it was for the better, I felt, and acknowledged; yet, with the perverseness of human nature, there were moments when the absence of this or that long-remembered piece of lumber stirred up in me a sensation, of which I did not imagine that a cause so trifling could have been productive. In like manner, it was with no ordinary pain that I observed, that, of the faces of the domestics who went and came about us, not one was familiar. The old servants, like the old furniture, had all been dismissed, to make way for others—more sightly, perhaps, and more submissive, but whether superior in the essentials of honesty and fidelity, might well be

doubted. These things cut deeply. For the first day or two, indeed, the effect of them was such as to render me but little disposed to court the society either of my father or his bride; nor was it till I had been nearly a week at home, that the former thought fit to make me in any degree acquainted with the origin and progress of his new connexion.

"There was little in the story to interest me at the moment; there is still less that deserves record now. Charlotte Howard was an orphan, the pennyless niece of one of our neighbours, on whose bounty she absolutely depended. Having lately returned from school, she attracted my father's notice, during a visit which he happened to pay to her uncle; and as he found her not more beautiful than amiable and accomplished, he made a tender of his hand. Charlotte was barely eighteen, my father forty-nine; but, to counterbalance this difference in their ages, she was portionless, whilst he was understood to be immensely rich. My father did not state how much he owed to the lady's personal predilection, how much to the persuasions of her guardian: on that head, he wisely left me to

judge for myself; but the result was, that about six weeks previous to the commencement of the long vacation, he led her, a weeping and bashful bride, to the altar. Yes; he used the word bashful, as if her reluctance were merely feigned, —as if she, a girl, artless, innocent, gay, lovely, felt no more than the ordinary coyness of a maiden so situated, in giving her hand to one— But no matter. He admitted that she wept— he did not say how she wept—he did not even allude to the hot scalding tears of utter misery, whose fountain lies in the innermost soul, and which run over only when hope is blighted for ever. No no; I was encouraged to conjure up an image of modest dew-drops—of one or two tears cheated from the eye, more through the power of momentary excitement than by the influence of sorrow. How different was all this from the truth!

"Well, the bride was carried off to the metropolis, where, amidst the gaiety of a London life, her first lessons in the duties of the married state were learned. In the mean while all those changes in and about the park, which had so powerfully affected me, were wrought; and only one fort-

night previous to my return, the happy pair took possession of their renovated mansion. Such is the substance of a conversation which I held with my father, on a certain day after dinner, to which I listened as to something neither very agreeable nor very interesting. How deeply did I deceive myself, in regarding it as devoid of interest.

"I know not whence it arose, but I experienced towards my mother-in-law, about this time, a feeling which I could not describe, but which tempted me as much as possible to shun her company, particularly when no other persons chanced to be by. Not that I ever thought of her with aversion. To look upon that countenance, to behold the varied and glowing expression of those eyes, yet entertain towards the being whose eyes met mine, any thing in the most remote degree akin to aversion, was impossible. On the contrary, I never beheld her without admiration, the deepest, the most intense. I never listened to the music of her voice, without a delight such as no other sound in nature could produce. I never thought of her when absent, without a degree of interest

painful indeed, but painful only from its excess. Yet I avoided her, as if there had been a pestilence in her breath, and a pollution in her touch. It was not often that I endeavoured to account for this; but when I did, images arose, humiliating and distressing, of the sort of tie which had brought us acquainted, and held us together. I could not bear to think of her as my father's wife—as one whom I was bound to approach with deference, and look upon with respect; yet I felt that to regard her only as the beautiful and innocent girl, and to treat her like a sister or a friend, would at once displease the man to whom I was indebted for my being, and infringe, seriously and improperly, upon the usages of society. Many days therefore elapsed, ere we could be said to know more of each other's tastes and habits than was disclosed at the moment of our first introduction:—well would it have been for both, had this just and cautious reserve been persevered in.

"With his state of celibacy, my father had, it appeared, put off that morose and haughty humour which kept him at a distance from all his neighbours. Repeatedly since their return

from London, had the new-married couple thrown open their doors to gay parties, and the old walls had more than once rung again to the tones of singing and minstrelsy. So excellent a custom was not to be interrupted by the arrival of the heir of the lordship; on the contrary, I was given to understand that, in honour of my visit, the entire neighbourhood had been invited to an entertainment, which was to exceed in splendour and elegance every thing of the kind which had for many years taken place in this part of the country. With what absolute indifference I listened to the announcement! What were gaiety or splendour to me? I had become all at once the most humiliated and self-condemned of human beings. All the glories of an Eastern palace, had they been spread out before me, would have failed to excite any pleasurable emotion. Nay, I pined for the gloom which was now dispelled for ever, and looked back with regret upon the very state of existence which was once the source of my most serious repining. What fickle creatures are we, even at the best! how little may our very tastes and desires be calculated upon!

" The day of gala came in its course, and brought with it a crowd of guests of all ages, of both sexes, and of every rank—from the proud wearer of the Earl's coronet, down to the simple commoner. Nothing could exceed the hospitable urbanity of my father; and the gentle attentions of his bride to all within her reach, were beyond measure gratifying. Then, again, as to the banquet—no luxury which earth, air, or water could produce, was wanted. The choicest wines were passed round with exuberant liberality; a crowd of servants in rich liveries prevented every wish; and the glare of golden lamps was reflected back by a profusion of massive plate, under which the table and sideboards groaned. Next followed the dance, the conversazione, the promenade, relieved and interrupted from time to time by bursts of the most exquisite music, till every sense seemed deadened by the multiplied sources of enjoyment, with which it was not so much supplied as sated. And how was I affected by all this? I looked on with the vacant stare of a spectator at a show which he understands to be delusive and unreal. I appeared, indeed,

to mingle, like the rest, in every amusement; I even gazed round upon the faces of my father's guests, seeking for one on which my eye might repose so much as for a moment. But I found none. Many fair countenances there were,—laughing, lively, happy countenances,—such as meet us in our dreams, when these are most pleasing, and leave a trace behind them when we awake. But before my eye that night they passed like shadows. There was but one countenance on which I could endure to gaze—and that one was — my mother. Heavens! what a profanation of the term. Charlotte Howard, the dark-eyed lively girl of eighteen, my mother!—she, who was by two full years my junior,—who smiled upon me, not with the haughty glance of a superior, but with the mild beseeching look of one who saw my agitation, and would have calmed it had she possessed the power,—who seemed to court, not to demand my notice, as if she needed support from me, and would have taken it as a boon!—Could I think of her as my mother? No; I never beheld her in that light; I could not think of her in that fashion. I was cold and

distant towards her, it is true—cold in my manner, distant in my address; but neither my coldness nor distance proceeded from that jealous aversion with which, as my step-mother, I might have been supposed to regard her. I shrank from her, because I already felt that I dared not trust myself near her;—yet my eyes followed her every movement, as if there were a spell upon them, which not all my efforts would suffice to break.

At last she sat down to her harp. Though I had been upwards of a fortnight under the same roof with her, I had never yet heard her sing or play; for my father entertained no taste for music, and I did not presume to solicit that she would perform for my gratification. I was sitting at the moment alone in a distant corner of the saloon, pretending fatigue, which in reality I did not experience, that I might escape for a few minutes from the toil of making myself agreeable, or supporting a conversation in which I took no interest. Of all the objects in the passing pageant, I beheld but her alone; and when there was a call of silence, I held my very breath, lest its sound should interrupt it. How

gracefully she stretched her fair round arm over the instrument!—with what taste she swept the chords as a prelude to her song! and then striking a few bold notes by way of symphony, she raised her eyes as if to ask for inspiration from on high. In an instant, her countenance was lighted up, and there burst from her a gush of sweet sounds, so mellow, so true, so plaintive, yet so powerful, that the most insensible could not listen without visible emotion. For me, I was entranced. All power of motion was taken away from me; I tried to draw near to her, but could not—I was spell-bound, as if by the voice of an angel.

"There was no instantaneous burst of applause when that sweet wild song ended. The effect produced by it was beyond the compass of words; it was felt, but could not be expressed. Men listened, as they are accustomed to do, for the echo that follows notes which come to them over water, and they seemed disappointed when no echo was heard; but if an irresistible impulse checked them at first, a universal murmur of delight gave evidence, as soon as the charm had dissolved, that their silence arose

from intensity of admiration, and that there is no tribute so pure, or so real, as that which cannot be expressed. Charlotte appeared distressed by the very plaudits which were intended to give her pleasure. She rose, blushing deeply, from her instrument, and made as if she intended to cross the saloon to a spot where a group of gay loungers were congregated together. At that instant her eye caught mine: what the expression of my gaze might be, I knew not; doubtless it was the same which had accompanied every glance that I cast upon her that night; but it produced a vivid, and, as I could not but observe, a painful effect upon her. Her colour fled, and she grew pale as death; then again the blood rushed to her cheek with increased violence; her breathing became suddenly interrupted, and she staggered as if threatened with a fit. I saw her condition, and sprang forward to assist her; but before I could reach the spot, her self-command had returned. 'I thank you,' said she, in a low tone, and with a smile beautiful but melancholy; 'I am better now, it was only a momentary faintness, occasioned by the heat of

the room. But how is it that *you* keep so much apart?' added she, speaking more easily, and resuming at once her naturally cheerful manner: 'I have observed you withdraw more than once, as if the fatigue were too great for you; or it may be that you dislike dancing—is it so?'

"'No, no,' replied I hurriedly; 'on the contrary, I delight in it; and as to my health, it never was more sound, nor were my spirits ever higher. May I convince you of my taste for dancing by requesting the honour of your hand? or——' and I was conscious, as I uttered the last half of the sentence, that my tone of voice, no less than my assumed gaiety, fell—'is it allowable in us, circumstanced as we are, to dance together?'

"'Oh, surely,' answered she, calmly; 'why not? We will lead off this dance, if you please, and you shall select the figure.'

"We did so; but there was madness in the entire proceeding,—glaring, palpable madness. We danced—at least I danced—like one who knew not whether he slept or were awake; and more than once I blundered in the very figure

which I had myself consented to choose. Our hands, as a matter of necessity, frequently met; as often as this occurred, a thrill passed through me like a shock of electricity, and my very brain swan confusedly. At last we gained the bottom of the set, and she rallied me, not however without a visible effort, on my forgetfulness. I tried to answer in the same strain of badinage, but my efforts proved unavailing; and I felt that to remain where I was any longer, yet retain my senses, was hopeless. I rose from the couch on which we had sat down, and complaining of a sudden indisposition, prepared to withdraw. 'Good God! then you are really ill,' exclaimed she, in a voice full of emotion; 'and I have thoughtlessly induced you to do that which has increased your indisposition.'

"'Not so,' replied I, struggling hard to appear calm; 'it is a trifling head-ache, which a few moments of quiet will remove. I will retire beyond the sound of music for a while, and return again when I feel better;' and I walked away as I spoke. I opened the door of the saloon, but before I closed it again, looked

round. She stood as I had quitted her, in an attitude of anxiety and alarm: her eye had followed my movements, and now it met mine, not designedly, but by instinct. God! what a look was that! I felt it in my heart, my soul, my brain; it stirred up thoughts, which, had they continued to burn but a moment longer, must have driven me to insanity. I saw it ever after in my waking visions, and in my sleeping dreams; at midnight and at noonday it was equally before me. Yet what was the language that it spoke? I could not tell; I did not dare to ask: I read in it something which I desired to read, yet which, having read, I would have given worlds not to have observed. I ran with the step of a maniac to my chamber; I closed the door, locking and bolting it as if against some deadly enemy; and I revisited the scene of festivity that night no more.

"It was late on the following morning before the breakfast-bell rang. On obeying its summons, I found that most of the guests of the preceding evening were gone, but that several still remained. All appeared jaded, as a matter of course; a night of revelry seldom fails to

bring in a morning of languor; but on none had fatigue produced so marked an effect as upon my father and his bride. The former, though manifestly struggling to wear the smooth brow of one at peace with himself and with every one around him, could not always repress a frown which told a tale of internal suffering either in body or mind;—the latter was dejected, thoughtful, silent, and uneasy,—and the more uneasy as her efforts to appear otherwise were too palpable to escape detection. I had done nothing to produce such effects. No, no; if there were other causes besides bodily fatigue for the embarrassment which displayed itself in the manner of the new-married couple, no blame could possibly attach to me. Why then did my conscience sting me? or rather, why did the suspicion arise at all, that there were other causes besides that which both avowed, and which all but myself appeared to admit? I blushed internally as these questions occurred, and, having hastily concluded my meal, I walked abroad to commune with my own heart in the solitude of the park.

"When I reached the house, the hall clock was striking a third quarter; and on looking up,

I perceived that the dinner hour was close at hand. I hurried off to my own apartment; but before I reached it, sounds smote upon my ear, which caused me unconsciously to stop. It was necessary, in order to reach my own, that I should pass my father's dressing-room, the door of which happened to be ajar. Heaven knows, there is no character so contemptible in my eyes as that of an eves-dropper; nor am I conscious that in taking the step which I took then, I incurred the guilt—for guilt it surely is—of seeking to pry into the secrets of others; but there was a magic in Charlotte's voice which I never could resist. Its tones fell around me, and I paused to drink them in, more gratefully than the wanderer in the desert drinks from a well where no water was anticipated. My feelings may be guessed at, when I discovered that she spoke not in joy but in sorrow. The words I could not overhear—I did not desire to overhear them;—but the tones were those of deep distress—of bitter heartfelt misery. Then came the sound of my father's voice, stern, as I had been told it was when addressed to my mother. I could bear this no longer. Plausible as he

was when strangers stood by, and smooth and oily as his outward manner might be, it was evident, that in private he gave vent to his cruel disposition, and that he exercised his cruelty upon his bride. I felt every vein in my forehead and temples swell, as the idea rose into my mind. I rushed forward, a curse trembling upon my tongue, a curse directed even against the author of my being, nor was it without an effort almost supernatural that I succeeded in repressing it. But I did suppress it. I even calmed in some degree the frenzy that raged within me; and having completed my toilette, I descended with an unruffled countenance to the dining-room.

"The last of our party had taken their departure some hours before, and we sat down, my father, Charlotte, and I, to a family meal. It was not a comfortable one. He indeed had put on that rigidity of countenance, which he desired should be mistaken for an expression of perfect good-humour; whilst I struggled hard to appear in my usual spirits; and even Charlotte strove to look—what she felt not—happy. But our conversation, being on all hands forced, soon became flat, and finally died away into

mere question and answer. Charlotte, indeed, complained of illness, which she attributed to the exertions of last night, and quitted us almost as soon as the cloth was withdrawn; and then my father and I were left to enjoy, as we might, each other's society.

"For some minutes neither party had spoken, and my thoughts were beginning to wander I scarce knew whither, when my father, after filling his glass, and pushing the bottle to me, desired to know how I liked my mother-in-law. I do not believe that any peculiarity of manner accompanied this question,—I am quite sure that it was a natural one, and one which ought to have produced no such effect upon me; but I started in my seat at the words, and turned round, as if an evil spirit had spoken. My father was not so much as looking towards me: he sat with his elbow upon the table, watching, to all appearance, the sun, as he set behind a hill; and though a second or two elapsed ere I could so far command myself as to reply, he either took, or appeared to take, no notice of my embarrassment. As may easily be imagined, I expressed myself, when I did speak, greatly de-

lighted with the lady ; I passed upon her such ordinary eulogiums as men are accustomed to bestow upon women in whom they take no great interest.

" ' I am glad you are pleased with her,' replied he in the same tone of indifference, and still gazing steadily upon the setting sun. ' She is an extremely amiable and excellent person, somewhat young and inexperienced, no doubt; but perfectly free from deceit and affectation. Yet your manner towards her has not been such as to impress her with the belief that you really like her. So she says at least, for I have seen nothing of the kind ; but she complains that you shun her on every possible occasion, and that if by any accident you cannot effect your escape, your address is always formal, and your air distant. Surely you are above the silly feeling which sometimes urges men to be jealous of their fathers' wives.'

" He turned round as he spoke ; but though I did my best to read his secret thoughts, I could discover nothing in the glance of his eye beyond the expression naturally connected with the subject of our conversation. Relieved be-

yond measure at this, I hastened to assure him that no such paltry sentiments were encouraged by me, and I strove to account for a shyness, of which I was too conscious to deny it, by reminding him of the brief standing of our acquaintance, and the peculiar circumstances under which it commenced. All this seemed to be taken as I could have wished. He admitted that our first interview was not such as to lead to an immediate intimacy, but hoped that time would gradually dispel every unpleasant association which that might have produced, and that, before long, we should be on the footing of easy familiarity which the connexion subsisting between us demanded.

" ' Besides,' continued he, ' you are so nearly of the same age, that to treat one another with coldness or excess of deference were ridiculous. She must be to you rather as a sister than a mother,—indeed, she ought perhaps to have been your wife rather than mine.'

" I cannot tell whether my own heart deceived me, but, as he uttered these words, I fancied that I could detect in the corner of his eye a lurking suspicion, the more hideous as it was not

intended to be seen. If I was right, the expression lasted but for an instant,—so abrupt indeed were both its coming and going, that thought itself could hardly overtake it,—and then all was again smooth and placid. The speech itself, however, was sufficient to embarrass me, for I was at a loss not only how to reply, but how to understand it; so I stammered out something about behaving on all occasions to my father's wife as her station in the family required. My father took no notice of these expressions. He changed the subject, indeed, almost immediately; and the remainder of our *tête-à-tête* passed off as such conferences were accustomed to do.

"I know not why I have dwelt thus minutely upon the occurrences which marked the commencement of Charlotte's and my acquaintance. In themselves, I am aware that they possess few claims upon the notice of a stranger; yet their influence upon me was great and lasting—so lasting indeed as to controul my entire destiny. They have left too an impression upon my mind so deep, that years will not suffice to blot it out, should years of a hated existence be forced upon

me. But I will strive to write more concisely hereafter: I will dwell upon nothing which the nature of the task which I have imposed upon myself will suffer me to pass by.

"Days, weeks, nay months passed away, without the occurrence of any incident particularly deserving of notice. For a time the course of gaiety in which he had embarked, was pursued by my father with steady resolution, and visits were frequently paid to our neighbours, as they in their turn were frequently entertained at home. But by degrees his old humour began again to obtain the ascendency over him. His pride and ill-humour broke out on more than one occasion, with a violence which no equal could endure; and his neighbours, as a necessary consequence, grew cold in civilities which seemed so little valued and were so thanklessly received. This change on their part operated only to rouse the natural implacability of his temper. A slight offered or received, sufficed to put an end at once to all farther intercourse with the offending party, no matter how gross and glaring the provocation might be. In this manner, first one, then another of our

visitors fell off, till ——— was left once more in the state of almost total solitude which formerly distinguished it.

" In proportion as this state of things attained its climax, my father's retired and unsocial habits resumed their ascendency over himself. His voice recovered its natural tones; he rarely spoke except in anger, or, which was infinitely worse, in bitter raillery. The society of his wife appeared to possess no charms for him, and mine he rather shunned than courted. We never saw him, indeed, except at meals, for his mornings were spent constantly in the library, and he retired thither again as soon as the dinner ended; and as to any act of kindness or attention, neither the one nor the other received such at his hands. I need not after this observe, that the feeling so opposed to love, which I had struggled to subdue, again oppressed me as often as a thought of my father occurred; whilst poor Charlotte's dread of him became before long too conspicuous to be concealed.

" The consequence of all this was, that she and I were thrown continually upon one another for society, for consolation, I had almost said for

support; whilst the reserve which had hitherto subsisted between us melted gradually away.

"Instead of separating for the rest of the morning, as we had been accustomed to do at the breakfast-table, we found ourselves occupying the same apartment—she busied with her needle or her pencil, and I reading aloud the work of some author equally a favourite with both. Then came the time of exercise; and our walks, our rides, our drives, were felt to possess many additional attractions, now that they were taken, not separately, but together. Music, too, lent its powerful attractions. Our tastes here, as in literature, accorded; and the songs which she sang with the liveliest satisfaction to herself, were listened to by me with a feeling too deep even for tears. Need I say how all this ended? Wedded to one whom she had never loved, whose years alone had been sufficient obstacle to a union so revolting; and treated, even within a few months from her bridal day, not with indifference only, but with harshness and brutality; can it be wondered at, if she unconsciously gave to another that which was no longer her's to give? No; even though that other was the

son of her husband, and, as a necessary consequence, a being from whom she was divided by a gulph never to be passed,—who can blame her? She but obeyed the impulses which nature has implanted in every bosom; and obeying them without a consciousness of the results to which they lead, she was innocent. But for me, no such excuse was mine. I saw the chasm before me,—plainly, clearly, saw it. I knew even from the first, that to remain near her, yet retain the mastery over myself, was impossible. Then why did I not leave her? Why did I not abandon my home for ever?—a home which, till she entered it, possessed no attractions, and which, now that she was there, ought to have been regarded with horror. I cannot answer these questions. There was a spell upon me, which drove me on, with eyes open and senses wide awake, into the abyss that some power higher than my own will had prepared for me; and I followed its impulse, like a sheep led to the slaughter, without so much as making one struggle to resist it.

"In this manner the remaining portion of summer rolled on, and autumn came in, with all

his variegated hues and sombre beauty. How delicious were the walks which we took at that glorious season, amidst groves dark with decaying foliage! How soothing were the moments which we spent under some tall beech or umbrageous elm, whilst the dead leaves shaken from the branches at every breath, fell one by one at our feet! True, the thought of parting came but too frequently into our minds, for the period of my sojourn at home was drawing rapidly to a close; but the parting hour was yet by several weeks distant; and when did young hearts learn to anticipate distress? Never: at those blessed moments, (for blessed I must still regard them,) every thing was forgotten beyond the events of the passing hour. Yet let me not be misunderstood. Never had there passed between us one word, one syllable, one allusion, which the angels of light would have blushed to witness. Our love, if such it must be called, was wholly unmixed with every earthly and debasing passion. She was to me an object of adoration,—an idol,—to be gazed upon in holy rapture,—but with a rapture sanctified by the most profound

respect; whilst to her, I was as the brother of her affections—the friend on whom alone she leaned for aid in her difficulties, and consolation in her griefs. Could there be aught impure in the intercourse of persons actuated by these sentiments, and these only? Why was it, then, that such moments never failed to bring in their train, hours of agony and remorse?

"The fatal period, so often thought of, and to which every allusion had been, as it were, studiously avoided, came at last. The middle of October arrived, and brought with it the necessity for my immediate abandonment of —— and return to college. For some days previously, our intercourse, though not less constant than before, had been accompanied with a degree of restraint perfectly novel. The truth is, that we were equally desirous of hiding the sorrow of which both were equally conscious, and the effort necessary to ensure success, caused us to appear strange in each other's eyes. But the attempt, though nobly made, and for a while steadily persevered in, proved ultimately useless. Feeling, if it be really strong, will break through every restraint both of prudence and

duty; and ours were far too impetuous not to sweep all such barriers before them.

"It was now the day preceding that which had been fixed for the commencement of my journey. It was Sunday, too,—that day of holy rest, which in the country, at least, never dawns without bringing a blessing along with it both upon man and beast; and Charlotte and myself, according to our invariable practice, attended divine service together. My father was not of the party; indeed, many years had elapsed since he last beheld the interior of a church, of which, and of the clergy, it was too much his custom, if he spoke at all, to speak in terms of contempt. There is nothing particularly imposing in the structure of the little church which adjoins the palings of the park; it is a plain and rather rude pile, very ancient, as its style of architecture proves, but absolutely devoid of any thing like elegance or stateliness in its general arrangement. Of the officiating minister likewise, though a man of excellent character and acknowledged respectability, it cannot be said that he laid claim to any peculiar distinction on the score of impressiveness of

manner either in the desk or pulpit; yet on no previous occasion had the simple but sublime service of the liturgy produced so powerful an effect upon me: not at any moment of my life was I conscious of devotional feelings deeper or more engrossing than came over me then. I prayed, I say not fervently, but bitterly; the very tears made their way through the hands in which my face was buried; my whole soul seemed abstracted from earthly considerations, and even Charlotte was, for a time, forgotten. How she was affected I know not; for, from the commencement of the service to its close, I never once beheld her, so entirely was my attention given up to the solemn business in which I was engaged. Is it not strange that feeling such as this should leave no hallow behind it? Perhaps my prayers were breathed forth in a temper not sufficiently submissive; or it may be, that though the imagination became excited to a high degree, the heart was never touched. Be it so. All of which I am aware is this, that the first breath that blew upon me, after I quitted the edifice, scattered every pious sentiment to the elements, and that I became

again the slave of a passion, as resistless as it was fatal, and as fatal as it was unholy.

"We did not return home as soon as the service concluded; but Charlotte passing her arm through mine, we sauntered on towards our favourite retreat in the beech-wood. We sat down as usual, just within the shelter of the grove, on a mound from whence a view of the whole landscape could be obtained, whilst we were ourselves concealed from observation. The day was beautifully mild and serene; there was not a cloud in the sky, nor a breath of air astir sufficiently violent to shake a withered leaf from its stem. A universal silence was around us, broken only by the full, clear, and melodious notes of a thrush, which poured, from a brake hard by, a torrent of natural music. We looked abroad, too, upon a scene of no ordinary beauty,—upon herds of deer quietly grazing,—upon the modest church more than half concealed in the grove that encircled it,—upon hamlets, villages, and solitary cottages, reposing in the sanctity of the sabbath; but of human beings, not a trace could be discerned. There was

something in this perfect solitude particularly affecting to persons in our situation: we did not interrupt it by any attempt at conversation, to which we felt ourselves quite unequal, but sat in silence, whilst visions the most melancholy passed over our minds, like the shadows of clouds on a summer's day over the side of a hill.

At last, the gradual inclination of the sun towards the west, warned us that it was time to quit the spot: we rose, as if by common consent, to obey the impulse, just as his disk reached the horizon; and we stood motionless, whilst it sank lower and lower, till it wholly disappeared. It was then that for the first time I ventured to speak: what I said I know not; I believe it was some commonplace remark, such as the circumstances of the case called forth,—as that I should be far away when next she beheld the sun set, or something to that purport; but it appeared as if the tones of my voice were alone required to break the spell which had so long bound us, and to cause the feelings of both, hitherto painfully repressed, to overflow.—Charlotte burst into

tears. Instinctively I threw my arm round her waist,—a movement which she sought not to prevent, and then she laid her head upon my shoulder, and wept bitterly. I cannot pretend to describe what I felt at that moment; I could not speak comfort to her, for my own tears choked my utterance; but I pressed her to my heart, as if it were there, and there only, that she must read the secret which my lips refused to reveal.

"We stood thus for several moments; not a sentence had been spoken by either, though both were too fully aware of the issue to which matters had been driven; when Charlotte, by a desperate effort, checked her weeping, and raising her head from my shoulder, proposed that we should return home. I obeyed without hesitation, and giving her my arm, we set forward in the direction of the house. We had just cleared the wood, when, happening to look back, I perceived the figure of a man passing with apparent caution to the right,—and a single glance served to convince me that it was my father. A horrible consciousness struck at once to my heart. I permitted Char-

lotte's arm to drop from mine, my senses all but forsook me, and it was not without difficulty that I prevented myself from falling to the ground. Alarmed at my condition, though ignorant of its cause, she shrieked aloud, and addressed to me in her agony, terms such as she ought never to have employed, nor I permitted. The words, not less than the manner of the speaker, restored to me at once my self-command. I perceived that she had not observed the spectacle which had so dreadfully shocked me; and determined not to distress her by any intimation of the truth, I pretended that a sudden dizziness had come over me, to which I was occasionally subject. I then urged her to clear away every trace of tears from her cheeks; and once more taking her arm in mine, led her, at a quick pace, to the house.

"We parted in the hall, Charlotte going to the drawing-room, whilst I hurried off to my own apartment, to indulge in a train of ideas more hideous than had ever yet entered into my mind. Could it be that my father entertained any suspicion of my honour, or his wife's fidelity? Could he act the part of a spy upon

us, all the while that he pretended to desire our intimacy? Above all, was it possible for him to have witnessed all that passed in the beech-wood?—What then? Had we been guilty of any deed, or spoken a single word, of which there was real cause to be ashamed? No! Whatever our feelings might have been, at least they were not disclosed; and the embrace,—was it more than the peculiar circumstances in which we stood authorized? Had I done aught besides what was enjoined upon me, in behaving towards Charlotte as a brother, and a friend? And was it not natural, on the eve of parting, that we should exhibit some such proofs that we looked forward to the separation with regret? All these questions I strove to answer to my own satisfaction; but there was a fiend in the back-ground which continually reminded me, that the answers, though true in letter, were false in spirit. How conscience does make cowards of us! Had my own heart been able to acquit me, there would have been nothing in nature besides capable of stirring up one painful reflection; but my heart did not acquit me, and all my anticipations were, in

consequence, terrible. I thought of the injury I had done, and of its probable punishment—a punishment to be poured out not upon me alone, for that I could have borne, but upon one dearer to me than life—to secure whose happiness I would have been content to sacrifice not only present peace, but eternity itself. I thought of Charlotte, not merely neglected and occasionally chid, as was her fate now; but upbraided, insulted, disgraced, turned out upon a cold world, with a reputation blasted, and a broken heart;—whilst I, the miserable cause of all this, could not offer to her so much as the last refuge of the guilty and the desperate. Maddened with the horrid picture, I threw myself with my face upon the bed, my whole frame shaking in convulsive agony; till the sweat-drops stood upon my brow like dew, and my brain burned as if it had been on fire.

"By degrees, however, Hope, that inextinguishable principle in minds not utterly seared, began to exert its influence. There were no proofs before me, either that my father was really suspicious, or that, being so, he had

watched our proceedings; still less had conclusive evidence appeared, that our proceedings on that day were observed. At the moment when I saw him, he was too far removed from the spot where we had sat, to overhear our conversation, had such passed between us; and the shape of the wood was, I felt confident, such, as to screen our very figures from his observation. Should the case be so, then all might yet be well, and I should leave Charlotte exposed to no greater risks and miseries than were already about her. But should it not, —I would not receive that impression again. There was something within, which whispered that all could not be lost. We were not sufficiently guilty to merit utter perdition; and Heaven was too just to destroy on account of errors purely involuntary, and only of the mind. No, no; my fears had been too excessive, and I did wrong to indulge them. At all events, there was no advantage to be derived from the anticipation of evil; of the coming of which, if it were to come, I should soon receive tokens not to be misunderstood; so I determined to

command myself, and to be guided in my judgment of what was likely to fall out, by the behaviour of my father when we met.

"Thus reasoning, I made haste to change my dress, and descended to the dining-room. Just as I reached the door of his apartment, my father came forth, and I found, that however sturdy resolutions may be whilst the necessity of acting up to them is remote, they hold but an insecure ground if suddenly put to the test. My heart beat quick, and I would have passed on; but he spoke, and, agitated as I was, I retained my senses sufficiently about me to be aware that the moment of trial had arrived—I stopped. His observation was one of ordinary salutation merely. He hoped that I had had a pleasant walk—said that the sun set beautifully, and predicted an agreeable day for my journey on the morrow; and he did so in a tone perfectly calm and natural: indeed, if any thing, with more of kindness in it than he had of late cared to show. I felt as if a mountain had been removed from my chest. I breathed again. I was like a person to whom liberty is unexpectedly restored,—like a criminal reprieved on

the very scaffold. Hope for once had not deceived me; and my suspicions were proved to be groundless. With a light step and a joyous countenance, I continued my course to the dining-room; and I sat down to table a happier man than I had been during many weeks before.

"Moods of the mind, whether gay or melancholy, are surely infectious, where persons who take a real interest in each other's welfare, are met together. We had not long been seated, when the dejection which at first marked Charlotte's air, gradually cleared away, and she joined cheerfully in the conversation, of which I was the prime mover and the chief support. My father, too, seemed to have laid aside for a time his constitutional coldness, that he might make the last evening of my sojourn an agreeable one; indeed so affectionate was his manner towards both Charlotte and myself, that had I not been under the influence of false excitement, that very affection would have stung me to the quick. I was, however, too happy in the discovery that my fears were without foundation, to permit any consideration of minor moment

to ruffle me; and hence I acted and spoke, not like one about to quit a place endeared to him by the most tender associations, but as if the journey to be taken were one of pleasure. My father rallied me in this; Charlotte, too, threw out some hints which I could not misunderstand;—but I answered both in the same tone of levity, and then changed the subject. That the excitement might not abate, I drank wine profusely; and my father, though usually abstemious, encouraged me in so doing, by imitating my example. By and by, Charlotte quitted us. There was a slight flutter of the pulse as the door closed after her,—a slight sense of apprehension, that a second trial was at hand; but nothing whatever occurring to justify the suspicion, I again became re-assured; and we again plied the bottle, till I certainly, and my father, to all appearance, became considerably enlivened. But we broke up from our orgie at last, and following Charlotte to the saloon, the rest of the evening was spent in listening to Handel's exquisite music, rendered doubly sublime by being expressed in the tones

of a voice to which those of the seraphim were harsh and inharmonious.

" It was drawing late, and all appeared to feel that the parting moment was come; for it was necessary for me to set out at an hour when few even of the domestics would be stirring. I did my best to appear calm; I even strove to keep up the gaiety of countenance which during the last hour or two had been worn in mockery of a heavy heart. Charlotte likewise struggled hard to repress her grief; and she succeeded so well, that not a tear burst from the lids, beneath which a torrent lay imprisoned. My father was the first to speak. 'Good night, Charles,' said he, holding out his hand; 'there is nothing to be gained by prolonging a scene like this. Part we must; and though it be for a short time, to part is never agreeable. Go, kiss your mother—pooh—pooh—kiss Charlotte, and tell her not to break her heart, for you will return to us at Christmas.'

" I had replied to the squeeze of his hand, and was preparing to salute Charlotte, when the latter part of his speech attracted my notice.

It had never been customary for me to visit home during any of the shorter vacations. These I usually spent either in Cambridge, or in town, or with some of my college friends, whose residences were not so remote as mine from the seat of learning; and the invitation to deviate now from an established practice, could not but forcibly strike me. I looked at my father suspiciously, but there was an air of absolute frankness about him which fully satisfied me that the invitation was not given invidiously. Still I hesitated how to answer him. God knows, my inclinations were not doubtful; had I acted as they pointed out, I should have at once closed with the proposition, no matter how pregnant with mischief; but there was an apprehension, suggested by conscience alone, lest my motives might be read, which caused me to appear undecided, if I really was not so.

"'You do not mean to deny us the pleasure of your company at Christmas?' asked my father; 'I am sure both Charlotte and I shall mope to death till we see you again. Try, my love, try your influence with this truant,

who seems to quit his home with smiles, and looks forward to his return with tears.'

" Charlotte spoke. Her words were pronounced with difficulty, and the tone of her voice was low and plaintive; but it penetrated to my very heart, and put in jeopardy all my artificial composure. ' You will not reject your father's invitation?' said she: ' for my sake, not less than his, do not refuse him what he asks.' It was not without a desperate effort that I restrained myself; but I did restrain myself so far as to reply, in a tone meant to be that of indifference, that against such entreaties I could not think of standing out. I felt, however, that to dissemble much longer would be impossible. I accordingly took her hand, imprinted upon her cheek a cold, formal kiss, then snatching up my candle, hurried away to the privacy of my own apartment.

" I need not say that to me that was a night of intense and overwhelming misery. The steps which I had taken to support my courage, however effectual they might have been at the moment, told, now that I was alone, fearfully against me; for the excitement produced by

wine soon evaporated, and left me more than ever a prey to despondency and self-reproach. I could not lie down; I did not so much as think of undressing; but, with a brain distracted by a thousand fearful forebodings, and a fever raging through every vein, paced my chamber backwards and forwards, with the step of a maniac. Yet the images which passed through my mind that night, left no marked or definite form behind them. I believe indeed that they were too wild to assume a definite form,—that they were rather the shadows of terrible ideas, than ideas themselves,—vague, indistinct, uncertain, pointing to nothing tangible, nor resting upon any palpable foundation, but painful as the operations of a confused dream, when nothing more is remembered than that it was the source of exquisite distress. The truth is, that though conscience might have told a hideous tale, I was not sufficiently brave to let her voice be heard. Had I possessed courage enough, or candour enough, to listen to that monitor, the cause of my agony would have been at once displayed, and possibly all that followed might have been avoided; but I

closed my ears against a warning note, which would have sounded harshly in proportion to its truth, and I have paid the full penalty of my own weakness.

"I pass over the events which immediately followed, partly because I myself retain of them but an indistinct recollection, and partly because, were the case otherwise, the detail could excite no interest in the mind of a stranger. Let it suffice to state, that morning found me thus occupied, not a single preparation having been made for my journey, and that when the arrival of the carriage was announced, I only began to take steps, which under other circumstances would have been taken many hours before. Notwithstanding the delay thus occasioned, however, I saw nothing either of my father or Charlotte. I think their usual hour of descending to the breakfast-room had arrived previous to my departure,—I am almost confident that it had; yet they made not their appearance, and the very shutters of their apartments remained closed as I passed under them. I did not look up again; on the contrary, I threw myself back in the chaise with the firm deter-

mination of forcing my thoughts into another channel:—how far I succeeded need not be told.

"At noon on the following day, I reached Cambridge; but how changed in every respect since last I traversed its venerable streets! I had been an enthusiast once in the studies of the place; I had aspired to the attainment of academic honours, and was not without a hope of succeeding to the utmost; whilst at the same time no man ever entered more freely into the gaieties, nor enjoyed more heartily the society of his fellow-students. Now I loathed them all: my books were neglected; my friends were avoided; I shut myself up in my chambers, a gloomy and discontented wretch, that I might ponder in solitude upon the single and horrible idea which began about this time to take possession of my mind.

"There are few ancient houses which have not a traditionary saying handed down from generation to generation, with which, in some way or other, the fate of the race is supposed to be connected. As I have already stated, ours was one of the oldest families in the north of

England, as it had formerly been one of the most powerful; and we were not without our ominous prophecy, though when, or on what occasion spoken, I never heard. You must know that we bear as a device upon our shield, three young falcons, with a falcon likewise for our crest. Whether the rhyme has reference to these circumstances, no one presumed to say; but there was a distich well known in the family, which obtained an increased importance in consequence of the coincidence, and which was supposed to forbode, that at some period or other, the house of ——— would become violently extinct. It was this:

'The —— of —— sal rue the hour,
When the young hawk harries the old hawk's bower.'

"I have said that this venerable distich was well known to every member of the family. It had been repeated to me a hundred times, at least, by my nurse; and even my father, during an occasional gleam of good humour, had more than once alluded to it; but, as may well be believed, it never made upon me a greater impression than any other couplet of similar import and antiquity. Now, however, the case

was different. I began to see it in the prophetic character which had all along been affixed to it by others. I took particular notice of its fitness, with reference to the armorial bearings of the house ; and as the allusion could hardly be to an ordinary spoliation, my excited imagination was not slow in discovering another and more apt point of tendency. To speak out at once,—I fancied that the day of our house's downfall had come,—that I was the miscreant by whose sacrilegious means its ruin was to be effected,—that I had already harried the nest of my father, by stealing away the affections of his wife, and that the penalty threatened would not fail to be exacted. No language would do justice to the effect produced upon me by this hideous conviction. I have sat motionless during an entire morning, ruminating upon the prophecy till all faith in the power of my own will to regulate my actions vanished; and I have risen, not furious, nor even excited, but calmly and deliberately convinced, that there was a path before me in which I could not avoid to walk, though the precipice to which it conducted was not for an instant concealed.

"It was not customary between my father and myself to keep up any frequent or regular epistolary communication. In case either party had business to transact with the other, then indeed the usual silence was broken; but letters of affection merely had never passed between us, from the hour at which I first quitted home for school. Under these circumstances, I had no right to expect that any notice of what might be passing at ——— would be transmitted to me; and as often as I permitted sober reason to exert her power, this truth failed not to come conspicuously into view. But sober reason possesses but a very interrupted, as well as feeble influence, over a mind engrossed by one tumultuous and fatal passion. Morning after morning, I examined my breakfast-table for that which was not, and ought not to have been looked for there; and on each occasion I felt as if some serious injury had been done, such as I was justified in desiring to revenge. In short, I ceased either to think or act like a man in his senses,—I became, to all intents and purposes, insane.

"Slowly and drearily the time rolled on; but,

slow and dreary as was its progress, it drew gradually to a close. It was now that a wild joy, scarcely more endurable than the despair which preceded it, began to assert its supremacy over me. In a few days more I should be again an inhabitant of the same dwelling with her to whom I felt myself bound by ties stronger than any human connexion acknowledges; and what to me was every consideration besides? I was no longer master of myself. The subject of a prophecy—marked out by destiny itself for one particular course—how was it possible for me to avoid my fate? and though that fate should envelope in it the ultimate misery both of myself and those most dear to me, how was I answerable? Such were the strange thoughts which pressed themselves upon me with an energy not to be resisted, and such the frame of mind into which I had fallen, when I once more quitted the University for the place of my birth.

"It was a clear frosty morning, the sun was shining brightly, and the earth, covered with a coat of hard crisp snow, was glittering as if overspread with diamonds, when I arrived at the well-remembered lodge. The gate was

opened, as it had been before, by the pretty country girl, who, as formerly, dropped me her neatest curtsey as the carriage rolled through; nor could my eye discover any alteration in the form and aspect of things around, greater than the change of season was calculated to produce. There was something satisfactory in this; why I knew not; but as the postilion drove at the full speed of his horses, though even then at a pace tedious and wearisome to my impatience, I felt as composed and happy as a man can be under such circumstances. By and by, the wicket was passed and the turning made, and I was once more in front of the home of my fathers. It was now for the first time, when the sound of the bell smote upon my ear, that my heart fluttered violently; indeed, so great was my agitation, that, after the door had been opened and the steps let down, I found considerable difficulty in alighting. I exerted myself, however, strenuously to hide this agitation, and strove to assume, as I proceeded, an air of extreme composure, with so much success that the peculiar expression of the servant's countenance as he looked me

in the face, though noticed plainly enough, did not discompose me.

" ' Your master and mistress are well, I hope?' said I, in what I meant to be a careless tone.

" ' My master is well, Sir,' said the man, ' but—'

" ' But what?' exclaimed I, forgetting in a moment the resolution which I had just formed. ' Speak out, man, at once—your mistress—'

" ' Has been extremely ill for some weeks past,' replied he, ' and is now, I fear, at the point of death.'

" I heard no more. I threw my hat upon the table, and brushing past the servant, ran with the speed of thought up stairs. In an instant I was at the door of her apartment: it was ajar; and without considering the consequences which might accrue, I pushed it open. There was no attendant in waiting. The curtains were drawn closely round the bed; and the blinds let down, with the shutters half closed, threw a dismal light over the chamber. There was a dull noise, too, as of one who breathed with difficulty or in a slumber; and a slight move-

ment of the bed-clothes served to indicate that the former, not the latter, was the cause. Maddened with apprehensions, I knew not of what, I hastily pulled back the hangings: it was a desperate deed, and desperately done; but it roused the sufferer from her lethargy. She opened her eyes, they fell upon my countenance, and I was immediately recognised. One shriek told this—a shriek shrill, loud, terrible; —there was an effort, too, to rise—a movement as if to meet the embrace which was offered, but it failed. Before my extended arms could reach her, she fell back upon the pillow—she was dead.

"I saw this, yet I saw it with eyes dry as they are now. I looked upon her pale, smooth forehead, beautiful even in death; yet not a drop fell from my burning balls;—and I kissed her cold lips, calmly, as I would have kissed the block of marble. I had no power to weep; but, had the case been otherwise, the fountain of my tears would have been instantly congealed by the scene which followed. I was gazing upon the wreck of all that once was lovely and loveable, when a hand laid rough-

ly upon my shoulder, caused me to turn round. My father stood beside me. There was an expression in his face of every evil passion by which the human heart is capable of being wrung;—hatred, malice, pride, fury,—triumph likewise, hellish triumph, was in his eye, as he looked sometimes at the corpse of his wife, and sometimes at his son.

"'Wretch!' said he at last, 'behold thy handywork! Look at that frail but beautiful image, and know that thy villainy has wrought this deed—thy villainy, I say—thine! Think you that I could not see through the flimsy disguise with which you sought to blind me? Think you that my eye was not upon you in all your lonely walks and secret meetings? Have I not witnessed your warm embracings, heard your protestations, watched your very looks, read your very thoughts? Villain! traitor! miscreant! begone. Quit my presence for ever; and may the curse of a father weigh upon your spirit, till it drag you to the earth!'

"There was a spell upon me which I could not resist even for a moment. I heard him

out,—I heard him pronounce a sentence which I felt to be just,—and I saw that fate had accomplished its purpose. With a deliberate step, I quitted the chamber of the dead. I spoke to no one, but, hurrying from the house, became from that hour a wanderer and an outcast. I would have committed suicide, had I possessed the power; but on more occasions than one I found, that the power to die, at least by my own hand, was denied me. In this plight, I wandered from place to place, sleeping under sheds and in barns, but shunning as much as possible every inhabited spot, till chance, or the fatality which has guided me from my birth, brought me to Braeburn Lees. I had been then for several weeks a vagabond; my money was expended; and even my clothes had been in part disposed of, to procure the means of subsistence; when the idea of enlisting as a common soldier occurred to me. I obeyed it; and with the consequences which have followed, you are already acquainted."

CHAPTER V.

THE last gleam of daylight served only to render the characters of this manuscript visible, and I departed almost as soon as I had finished the perusal. I leave you to judge of the effect which that perusal produced upon me. If I felt interested in the fate of the unhappy youth before, my interest was now increased a hundred fold; and I rose from the ground fully bent upon saving him from the degradation of the lash, at all hazards. I determined, indeed, should other measures fail, to put the manuscript itself into the hands of the commanding officer, who could not possess the common feelings of a man, yet inflict so debasing a punishment upon the writer. Full of this notion, I

made all haste to the cantonments; and I reached them just in time to ascertain, that the Colonel had set out an hour before upon a visit to General Craufurd, and that he was not expected to return before midnight.

It was with a sensation of no ordinary disappointment, that I turned my back from his quarters.

My first idea was to sit up till he should return, and then at every risk to force my way into his presence, and plead the young man's cause vehemently, as I felt it. Bnt a minute's reflection served to convince me, that with a man of his temperament, such a course, so far from being productive of good, would only bring about much evil. That he would refuse to listen to my story, I knew the individual too well not to believe; or if he did listen, it would be in that frame of mind to which a man gives way, when, having made up his mind how to act, he nevertheless consents to hear the justice of his decision denied, or its policy called in question. That scheme was therefore abandoned almost as soon as it had been formed. But, between it and permitting things to take

their course, one only alternative remained, and to that, after considerable doubts as to its efficacy, I made up my mind to have recourse. It was our custom at this time, as it invariably is with the divisions in the front of an army, to get under arms every morning an hour before dawn; and I determined to make use of that breathing space for the purpose of making the Colonel aware of all the circumstances which had affected myself so deeply.

Nothing occurred that night, either to myself or Jackson, worthy of repetition; the latter sent no message to me, nor, as far as I could ascertain, took any other step to forward his own interests, but waited in silent indifference the issues of the morrow, be they what they might. As I afterwards heard, indeed, he appeared not unaware of the nature of the sentence which was awarded him, yet, with a coolness for which it would not be easy to account, sat down satisfied under the weight of his destiny. For myself, I retired to bed at my usual hour, and though for a time anxiety kept me awake, habit gradually asserted its influence, and I slept soundly.

It was still dark as pitch when the orderly-

sergeant entered the room to say, that the regiment was getting under arms. I sprang to my feet at the first summons, and hastily dressing myself, sallied forth to take my station at the head of my company: in five minutes after, a close column was formed upon the brow of the height, on which the corps remained till daylight began to appear; when the men being ordered to pile their arms, the officers were permitted to fall out, and to meet in groups, as was their custom, on the flank of the battalion. Now was my time for bringing forward Jackson's case; and I did not neglect it. I hastened to the spot where the Colonel stood, being resolved at once to entreat his perusal of the young man's narrative; but before I could reach him an aide-de-camp rode up, and my opportunity was lost. The aide-de-camp said only a few words and then rode on,—but these were words of moment, for the Colonel instantly mounted his horse, and ordered the regiment to stand to its arms. This was of course done, and done promptly; but minute after minute passing by, and nothing of moment occurring, the Colonel seemed to doubt the cor-

rectness of the information which he had just received, and, having warned the men not to straggle, nor take off their accoutrements till farther notice, he dismissed the parade. In an instant all hurried back to their quarters, and addressed themselves in good earnest to their morning meal.

Another opportunity was now presented to me, of which I gladly availed myself. Having waited till I saw the Colonel enter his quarters, I hastened after him, and, though no especial favourite, was not refused admission. The first sentence that I uttered, however, was all to which he would listen.

" Captain Chakott,' said he sternly, " I heard your intercession in favour of that man yesterday, and I told you at the moment how I intended to act. I have only to add, that, were he my own brother, he should receive the full amount of his sentence."

I would have still persisted in my suit, holding out at the same time the packet; but he made a motion with his hand that I should desist, and would listen to me no farther. I

walked away, more than half desirous to learn that Jackson had deserted.

No fresh alarm occurring, and the time appointed for the punishment being arrived, the bugles sounded. The call on such occasions is seldom obeyed with much alacrity; for, however obnoxious a criminal may be, there are few indeed who take pleasure in the spectacle which a military punishment presents; nor was the regiment more active in assembling now, than at other and similar moments. But it did assemble in due time. A square was then formed, the officers standing in the centre; and in a few minutes after, the prisoner was introduced under charge of the guard.

There was now a solemn and fearful silence, whilst the Colonel giving the word "attention!" proceeded to read aloud the minutes and sentence of the Court. These were listened to by the regiment with an involuntary shudder; by the prisoner with an intensity of feeling, which all his assumed composure failed to conceal. His cheeks were flushed, his lip quivered, his eye rolled round the assembly, as if its movements

were beyond the influence of his own control; and his limbs, though they did not quiver, were restless and uneasy, like the fore-feet of a hunter when checked as the view-halloo is given. No sooner, however, had the reading ceased, than he resumed, as if by magic, a perfect command of himself, and turned upon his commanding officer a glance, beneath which the eye of the latter, though bold and proud, seemed to quiver. "You have heard your sentence, Sir," said the Colonel, "and now I have only to observe, that were you my nearest relative, not one lash of the number awarded you should be abated. Strip, Sir!"

"Never!" replied Jackson haughtily. "Had I been guilty of any crime against God or man, I should have submitted quietly even to this;—but circumstanced as I am, the lash at least shall leave no debasing mark upon me." As he uttered these words, he sprang with the agility of a roe from the party surrounding him, and rushed furiously and desperately against the levelled bayonets of the square. In an instant, the firelock of one man was wrenched from his grasp; and consequences the most fatal must

have ensued, had not the attention of all, not even excepting the prisoner himself, been suddenly drawn away by a sound the nature of which there was no possibility of mistaking. It was the report, first, of a solitary cannon, then of three others in rapid succession, and then, of a heavy and unintermitting roar of musketry. There required no messenger to assure us that the enemy was coming on. The Colonel found time only to desire that the prisoner, who was again in custody, might be securely led to the rear, ere a mounted officer, breathless and covered with dust, arrived upon the ground; and the battalion breaking hastily into column, pushed forward to assume its station in the line.

I need scarcely remind you, that at the period to which my present narrative refers, Ciudad Rodrigo, after an obstinate defence, had fallen into the hands of the French, who in overwhelming numbers threatened an immediate advance upon the Portuguese capital. For some days past, indeed, they had been making movements sufficiently indicative that the moment of re-opening the campaign in real ear-

nest was not very distant; and the British army had, in consequence, been kept in a condition for moving at the shortest notice. So lately as the 21st, they had pushed forward a strong column both of infantry and cavalry, which, occupying Valdelamula, St. Pedro, and Villa Formosa, had caused our people to abandon and blow up the Fort of Conception; and now our most advanced corps lay resting its left upon Almeida, with its right, as well as its rear, covered by the Coa. Into that line we were pushed, and we took post in the centre, having a battalion of Caçadores on each flank, and the rocky bed of the river immediately behind us.

We had not assumed our alignement many minutes, when one of the most interesting military spectacles which it has been my good fortune to behold, opened upon us. Three British pickets, two of infantry, one of cavalry, had been posted considerably in advance of Almeida—about half way indeed between that fortress and the village of Villamula. These having been attacked by an overwhelming force of the enemy, were of course compelled to fall

back; and they now appeared, slowly and regularly retiring, before a perfect swarm of tirailleurs, supported by dense columns both of horse and foot. Nothing could exceed the cool and orderly manner in which that retrogression was conducted. Their retreat lay over a level plain, intersected here and there by hedges, stone walls, and enclosures, behind each of which, as it occurred, our people resolutely maintained themselves, till the enemy, extending far beyond their flanks, began to threaten them in rear, when they were again under the necessity of running back, as quickly as they could, to the next cover. Nor was it to infantry alone that those brave men were opposed. As soon as the country began to open sufficiently for cavalry to act, several squadrons of French dragoons dashing forward, made various attempts to intercept our people as they retreated from hedge to hedge, and from wall to wall,—insomuch that on more than one occasion the skirmishers were compelled to throw themselves into circles, and to withstand a charge as they best might. They were not, however, uniformly successful here. Some prisoners were unfor-

tunately taken, and several brave men sabred; till at last the pickets found that farther opposition was useless, and they fell back behind the division, now drawn out to receive the enemy.

The French, finding us in position along the brow of the height, paused for a few minutes, as if to give their generals time to reconnoitre our arrangements, and to complete their own. That was a moment of deep and extraordinary interest, when, the firing having ceased, the hostile lines stood opposed to one another, in all the pomp and majesty of war in its most magnificent array; and many a bosom beat with anxiety and proud daring, which within an hour was destined to cease beating for ever. But the pause, though strikingly fine, was not of long continuance. The French, sending off two lesser bodies to amuse the regiments on our flanks, drew up opposite to our centre an immense column of infantry, supported, and in some degree intermixed, with several masses of cavalry; and then, having saluted us with a warm discharge from thirteen or fourteen pieces of cannon, pressed forward with a fury which

we found it no easy matter to withstand. Of the events which immediately followed, I can offer no minute or accurate description; I saw only the flashes of our own and of the enemy's muskets, and heard but the roar of fire-arms, like the rolling of a drum,—whilst a smoke dense as the heaviest fog that ever darkened the city of London, soon rendered every object beyond my immediate front invisible.

In this state things continued for perhaps ten minutes; the increasing brilliancy of the fire from the head of the enemy's column proving that it drew every instant nearer and nearer. Our ranks, not very numerously supplied at the first, were now sadly thinned, and the tremendous shower of bullets thrown in upon us rendered it continually thinner; when a sort of wild cry from the French, not a shout, but a confused commingling of voices in all tones, and without any regularity, gave notice that they were about to bring their bayonets to the charge. I cannot accuse our men of want of courage at the very moment when I confess that they declined the challenge. Outnumbered to an immense degree, two-thirds of their original

strength cut off, or dispersed with the wounded, it was not to be expected that a single battalion would meet the rush of at least five thousand men, cheered forward, as these were, by the knowledge that a numerous cavalry was on their flank, ready to act with them. Our people gave way. There were no means of rallying them; no point indeed at which we could halt on this side the river; so we fled in extreme confusion towards the bridge, by which alone the Coa could be crossed.

It was well for us at this juncture, that the pickets, having formed in our rear, and being joined by parties from other corps, were enabled to oppose so much of a second line as to cover our retreat. Had it not been so, we must, to a man, have surrendered or been cut to pieces; for the bridge, when we reached it, was literally choked up with fugitives, the Portuguese having fled some time before we gave way; and as it was, our reserve being finally driven in, the enemy were enabled to bring some guns to bear upon us, from the fire of which we suffered severely. Nevertheless the passage was, in the end, made good; and then having halted among

some rocks and woods and broken ground, which overhung the opposite bank, we again faced about to resist any attempts which might be made to pursue us farther. These, however, were neither numerous nor desperate. Some squadrons of cavalry did indeed charge boldly towards the bridge, pushing a troop across, but that troop was cut to pieces by a division of German Hussars, and the fire of our artillery checked the remainder.

The cavalry being thus driven back, a few minutes' pause ensued, during which General Craufurd, and the officers of his staff, rode along our line, encouraging the men by their voices, and minutely examining their arrangement. In the mean while the enemy having reformed their solid column, began to crown the ridge of the opposite height, and showed as if it were their intention to force the passage of the bridge, and carry our position by assault; but they never once arrived within the reach of musketry.

No sooner had the mass begun to move, than our artillery opened their fire, and with a precision far surpassing any thing of which I could have formed a conception. First, their

shrapnells striking full into the centre of the column, caused large gaps to appear; then came the case and grape-shot, literally sweeping down whole sections, till the enemy, panic-struck, first halted, then wavered, then fled over the ridge in the greatest confusion. This was the last effort made to drive us from our new alignement. Though the smoke from their bivouac showed that they still hovered near, no farther attempt was made to pass the Coa; and we, following their example, caused our men to pile their arms, and lay down to rest about our watch-fires.

It was not, however, General Craufurd's design to await a renewal of the attack; to which, indeed, he had exposed himself in direct opposition to the wishes of Lord Wellington. His business was to fall back with as little delay as possible upon the main body; and that he made ready to accomplish as soon as a fitting opportunity should arrive. With this view our people were commanded, as soon as darkness set in, to heap quantities of fresh fuel upon their fires; and then stealing one by one so far to the

rear as that the blaze should not betray them, the different regiments formed quickly but silently into columns of march. That done, the guns, baggage, stores, and wounded, were sent off, and then battalion after battalion, leaving a brief interval between the head of one and the cue of the other, took the road to Alverca.

There remains but little for me to add connected with the fate of the Gentle Recruit. Our columns having reached their new ground without molestation, and the enemy evincing no disposition to follow them up, ample time was afforded for mustering the several battalions, and ascertaining the amount of our loss. When the regiment to which I was attached paraded, it was found that, among many others absent without leave, Jackson was not to be found. What had become of him, no one appeared accurately to know. It was ascertained, indeed, that when the firing grew sharp, and the guard was called away to join their comrades, the prisoner, instead of embracing the opportunity of escape, hastily threw on his accoutrements, and followed. That he took part

in the action, therefore, no one could doubt; but whether he fell, or was taken prisoner, or fled into the woods when our line was broken, remained a mystery. Nor was the mystery ever solved from that day to this. His name was given in among the list of missing, and he was neither seen nor heard of afterwards.

MAJOR CHAKOT'S story being brought to a close, the company, as in duty bound, spoke in high terms of its excellence, expressing themselves deeply indebted to the teller for the entertainment which they had received. His health was again drunk with the usual honours; after which, a general desire began to show itself, that, as the customary hour of breaking up was still distant, some other member of the mess would favour them with a legend. This was no sooner done, than all eyes were immediately turned towards the President, who seemed by no means disinclined to accept the challenge. He sat more erect than ever in his chair, filled his glass with great formality, then passed the bottle.

"I cannot possibly refuse," said he, "to obey the wishes of the company, having myself so lately required obedience in another. My tales,

however, as you well know, refer chiefly to other times; nevertheless, if you be content to listen to such as my budget contains, the budget shall very readily be spread out before you."

A general cry of "Go on, go on!" followed this brief peroration; after which Major Cohorn began as follows.

A DAY

ON

THE NEUTRAL GROUND.

A DAY

ON THE NEUTRAL GROUND.

CHAPTER I.

It is well known to every one at all conversant with the details of the American Revolutionary war, that at the period when the British troops occupied New York, and the army of General Washington its position in the Jersey highlands, a considerable extent of country, situated to the east of the Hudson's river, and supposed to measure at least fifty or sixty miles across, was recognised under the somewhat problematical title of the Neutral Ground. Whence it obtained this appellation, it is scarcely neces-

sary to mention. The regular outposts of the King's army extending but a little way in front of Kingsbridge, whilst those of the Republicans came not below Peekskill, a permanent superiority over the intervening country could not be claimed by either party; and hence, rather than on account of any recognised exemption from the evils consequent upon a state of war, a denomination was conferred upon it, of the privileges supposed to belong to which its inhabitants knew nothing.

Partly, perhaps, in consequence of the natural advantages of its situation, being washed on one side by the waters of the sea, and on the other by the magnificent Hudson's, and partly because its early settlers were men of patient and industrious habits, this district had long been conspicuous, even in the province of New York, for its extreme fertility and highly civilized appearance. The original forest had been every where cleared away; there arose in its room fertile fields, green meadows, blooming orchards, and neat plantations; several flourishing villages likewise sprang up, some of them near the margin of the sea, and others more inland;

whilst cottages, farm-houses, and even villas and gentlemen's seats, were scattered in great numbers over its surface. These, of themselves, were objects upon which, at this early period of American history, the eye of the traveller delighted to rest, but they composed not the only feature in the landscape which entitled it to the appellation of beautiful. There is much variety of scenery here, — hill and valley, rock and plain breaking in frequently, and with exquisite irregularity, one upon another; indeed, it would not be easy to point out any district, throughout the compass of the Union, at one emore luxuriant and more romantic.

I have said that the district in question was known by a title, its claim to which rested upon very equivocal grounds. It is true that a large proportion of its inhabitants, either guided by personal attachments, or held in check by fear, affected to take no part whatever in the struggle to which they were witnesses: they remained quietly in their houses, and with a show of equal hospitality, received whatever wanderers from either army might chance to visit them. But, if in these respects the belligerent powers conde-

scended to recognise their assumed rights, it must be confessed that there were others over which these rights were permitted to hold very little influence. The unfortunate population of the Neutral Ground lay exposed to constant annoyances and insults. Their fields offered a convenient foraging ground, not only to the King's but to the Congress's troopers; their sheep-pens and cattle-folds were equally accessible to marauders from the city or from the camp; whilst the Cow-boys, not less frequently than the Skinners, eased them of such articles of household stuff as happened to take the fancy of these lawless robbers. To sum up all in few words:—if the mere absence of two hostile camps from any particular district be sufficient to obtain for that district the character of neutrality, then were the counties of East and West Chester, with the townships of Stamford and Philipsbourg, neutral; but if the term be supposed to express any meaning beyond this, then was it, when applied to them, a gross misnomer.

Into this district it was customary for the officers belonging to General Clinton's army more especially, with such as chanced to occupy

the lines at Kingsbridge and Morrisiana, to make frequent excursions. Fields well stocked with quails and red-legged partridges, held out inducements to the sportsman not to be resisted. A variety of streams and rivulets in which trout abounded, produced a similar effect upon the angler; and even the idler was too well pleased to exercise himself in the open country and at a distance from the tumult of a barrack-yard, not to incur some hazard in the pursuit of that enjoyment. You will not be surprised to learn that these wanderings were not always accomplished without considerable risk to such as undertook them. On more than one occasion, narrow escapes from death or captivity quieted for a season that restlessness of disposition which leads young men of ardent temperaments to seek gratification at all hazards. Yet the impression made was very seldom either deep or lasting; and it no sooner wore out than the same adventures were sought, and the same dangers courted.

It was on a fine morning in September, in the year 1781, that two young officers belonging to the garrison of Kingsbridge set out upon

a sporting expedition into the Neutral Ground. The sportsmen were cousins-german: they had been companions in childhood, had received their education at the same school, and, having entered the army within a brief interval the one of the other, they now held commissions in the same corps. Having premised this, it is scarcely necessary to add, that they were sincerely and warmly attached to one another; yet were they in temper, disposition, manners, habits, and pursuits, as dissimilar as any two persons could be, or as can well be imagined. Oliver Beckwith, the elder of the two, was of a grave, sedate, and perhaps reserved turn of mind; correct in his proceedings, and guarded in his conversation, he rarely gave offence, even casually, to those among whom he lived; and if few entertained for him any thing like enthusiastic friendship, all who knew him both respected and esteemed him. His cousin Harry, on the other hand, was volatile, impetuous, rash, and even headstrong. Warm-hearted and generous, he was, however, too completely the slave of impulse, not to rush continually into scrapes for which his feelings

continually upbraided him. Whilst his professed wish was always to do right, and to secure the good will of those about him, he not unfrequently found that he had done wrong, and stirred up their animosity. Harry was one of those upon whom men cannot look with an eye of indifference. Among his friends, and he had many, he was adored. Lively, pleasant, high-spirited and witty, his society was courted with avidity, whilst his very failings were all attributed to a mere excess of qualities intrinsically good, but improperly regulated. But Harry had likewise his enemies, and these pronounced him to be hollow-hearted, selfish, and insincere; and it must be confessed that not a few of his proceedings formed at least a plausible ground on which to rest this very serious accusation.

With respect to the personal appearance of these relatives, enough is done when I inform you, that it corresponded very much to the account which has just been given of their manners and dispositions. They were both tall and well made, they were both possessed of regular features, and both, perhaps, merited the appellation of handsome, yet were their expres-

sions as unlike as their habits were at variance, the countenance of each being a pretty fair indicator of the turn of mind which produced it. Thus, Oliver, with his fair complexion and quiet blue eye, could never be mistaken for other than a mild-tempered and well-behaved young man; whilst the dark hue of his cousin's cheek, and the sparkling glance of his hazel eye, told a tale both of considerable levity and of deep and overwhelming passion.

The fall of the year, as our relatives of America designate its two or three latter months, is beyond all comparison the most delightful season in the province of New York; and the morning on which these young men made ready for their enterprise, was as lovely as ever shone from the heavens. The sun was just rising into a sky of the clearest and deepest blue, and the air, mild yet bracing, seemed capable of imparting fresh vigour even to the frame of one in the last stage of a consumption. The sea, gently agitated by the breeze, broke with a ceaseless murmur upon the shore, and the larks' sweet music thrilled from their unseen dwellings in the ether,—when the one armed with a fowl-

ing-piece, the other with a rod and basket, sallied forth from their hut dwelling within the lines. A couple of dogs gamboled before them, barking loudly to express their joy at being thus early released from confinement. A black boy, carrying a game-basket on his back, followed ;—and all, masters, servant, and dogs, pushed forward in the highest spirits, and in the best possible humour.

" And whither must we direct our steps to-day ?" said the elder of the two relatives to his companion, as they passed the advanced sentries, and entered fairly upon the Neutral Ground.

" To the old beat, I presume," replied his cousin, with a tone of indifference ; " I know no district in the county better stocked with birds, and the stream has never failed to afford you excellent sport."

" But is it prudent, think you, to venture so far from home ? Things are not now as they were a year ago ; that unhappy affair of André's has made the Rebels a thousand degrees more on the alert, and ought likewise to make us more cautious."

" Poh, poh !" argued the younger of the two,

" were we always to listen to the whispers of prudence, human life would furnish few sources either of advancement or pleasure. I dare say the Yankees are not rendered bolder by the discovery that all their officers are not to be trusted; they are not, therefore, likely to visit the Neutral Ground more frequently."

" But is it only on account of the birds and fishes that you prefer that beat?" asked the elder with an arch look.

" Why, what else should actuate me?" replied his companion, a slight flush passing over his cheek.

" Oh, I cannot pretend to say, only I thought it just possible that a brace of bright eyes might have as great a share in drawing you thither as a brace of quails."

" Now, Oliver," replied his cousin, " if I were of a hasty temper, which, thank God! I am not, I should be strongly tempted to quarrel with you for making that allusion. Have I not told you a hundred times, at least, that the girl is nothing to me: it is very true, that I think her pretty, and agreeable, and lively; and that a little innocent flirtation is, and always was, a

favourite amusement of mine; but if you really suppose that I entertain for her any serious attachment, I tell you once for all, that you are confoundedly mistaken."

"Then, my dear Harry," replied his cousin, with greater seriousness than he had yet used, "allow me to say that your behaviour is not what it ought to be; and far from being worthy of yourself. I do not understand the meaning of that phrase, innocent flirtation. You have paid to the young lady attentions so marked, that if you mean nothing by them, you have done both to her and yourself serious wrong, for rest assured that she does not regard them as matters of 'mere innocent flirtation.'"

"Now there you are again," replied the younger, "always harping on one string, continually giving lectures on propriety, and decorum, and honour, and I know not all what. In heaven's name what would you have me do? Am I not to speak pretty to a nice girl when I meet with her, especially if I chance to find that she has no objection to my conversation?"

"There is a prodigious difference between

what you are pleased to term 'speaking pretty,'" replied Oliver, "and dancing close attendance on a young woman for months together."

"And what if I do dance close attendance, as you call it, upon a girl whom I happen to admire?" replied Harry angrily; "is it any one's business besides my own?"

"It is surely the business of the girl so attended," answered his cousin drily.

"Well, and if she happen to like this attendance, who has any right to interfere?"

"Your own principles and sense of honour, Harry; unless indeed you have a definite object in view."

"In God's name, Oliver, what would you desire? Can there be any impropriety in cultivating the acquaintance of either man or woman for its own sake merely? You are becoming more and more rigid every day;—there is, really, no bearing with your code of stern morality!"

"Be patient, Harry," replied Oliver, "and do not permit that hasty temper of yours to blind you to the dictates of your better judgment. Certainly, there is no harm whatever in cultiva-

ting the acquaintance either of man or woman for its own sake merely :—but can you so far deceive yourself as to suppose for one moment that your conduct in this case comes under the head to which you would reduce it? Let me remind you of a few plain matters of fact. Upwards of a year has elapsed since chance brought you as a guest into the family of a man, who certainly treated you with no common kindness, and endangered his own safety to secure yours. It was under these circumstances that you first saw his daughter—a beautiful girl, I allow, and not more beautiful than amiable and accomplished; and it was no more than natural that you, a warm-hearted and generous boy, should be amazingly pleased with her. You paid her then the most marked attention; and you permitted but a few days to intervene after your escape to the lines, before you returned to thank both her and her father, for their hospitality. This, likewise, was quite natural,—indeed it was highly proper. But is it either natural or proper to visit them continually at the risk of your life or liberty—not on account of the father, for he, as you well know, seldom enters into your

thoughts,—but that you may speak soft things to the daughter; and that too, meaning nothing all the while? Why, Harry, I know no character so despicable as that of a man who can trifle with the affections of a young and artless girl,—I do not say as you intend to do, but as you certainly are doing, with those of Cecily. The scoundrel who seeks to undermine a maiden's honour, has at least the excuse, wretched as it is, of being hurried away by passion: but your cold, heartless, odious man flirt, the creature who can win a girl's love for the mere sake of winning it, and then leave her, broken in heart, though unstained in reputation, is in the eyes of every right-minded person, at once the most odious, and the most contemptible reptile breathing. Surely you would not desire to be classed in such society; yet if you mean nothing by all this, where else must I class you?"

"By heavens, Oliver," replied Harry warmly, "you presume both upon our relationship and early friendship too much. There is not another man breathing who would dare to speak to me thus; nor will I bear more of it, even from you. What if I have some design in view;

can that posisbly interest you, or entitle you to read me lectures, as if I were a schoolboy?"

"Yes, Harry," replied his cousin, "it can and does interest me deeply. For heaven's sake, take no rash step, nor make any rash promises. I am sure that Cecily Morgan is all that is pure and excellent; and that, choose whom you may, you are not likely to find one better calculated to make you happy. But consider how you stand in other respects. Your private fortune is very limited, and your pay a mere pittance; whilst the state of the country renders it at least highly improbable that Mr. Morgan can portion his daughter largely. To marry under such circumstances would be an act of insanity; whilst to incumber yourself with an engagement, of the speedy fulfilment of which there is no probability, would be to the full as imprudent."

"Marry!" ejaculated Harry contemptuously, "I am too old a bird to be caught in that springe yet a while."

Oliver stopped short as soon as this sentence caught his ear. He cast a stern look upon his relative, who, though clearly quailing under it, nevertheless strove to meet it with a bold

front;—and after a pause of several seconds exclaimed:

"I did not, I could not comprehend you, Harry. It is impossible that the friend of my youth, whom I have loved as a very second self, can be a deliberate and hardened villain!"

When our conscience tells us, that the plain-speaking of a monitor expresses nothing but the truth, we are more frequently driven to take offence at his candour, than to profit by his reproofs. On the present occasion, Harry Beckwith, whilst he writhed internally under the lash of his cousin's exclamation, either forgot, or pretended to forget, that it could have no force, unless his own designs created it. A flush of rage rushed into his cheek,—his eye shot fire, as clenching his fist, and stamping violently on the ground with his foot, he cried in a voice inarticulate from agitation—

"Oliver Beckwith, did you apply the epithet villain to me?"

"No," replied his cousin calmly, but in a tone of absolute resolution; "I did not apply that epithet to you. On the contrary, I expressed my conviction that I had misunder-

stood you when you seemed to apply it to yourself."

"This is mere trifling, Sir," answered Harry fiercely: "I insist upon an explanation more explicit, or upon the satisfaction of a gentleman."

"Harry," replied the elder cousin, "is it to me that you talk of satisfaction? or is it from me that you demand an explanation which one hint will always procure? What have I said or done to annoy you? I have but stated my conviction, and I state it again, that the friend of my youth cannot be so base a villain as to meditate the ruin of an innocent girl, to whose father he is indebted for his life."

"And who said that I meditated any thing of the kind?" asked Harry.

"What other construction am I to put upon your words, cousin? You first own that you have a decided object in view, with regard to Cecily Morgan; and then speak of marriage as a thing totally out of the question."

"Cousin Oliver," replied Harry, becoming gradually more calm, "let us drop this subject of conversation, which is not likely to lead

to any good, and may bring about some evil result. Take my advice for once, and whilst you pursue your own amusements, in which, God knows, I never seek to baulk you, leave me to follow mine equally unembarrassed. You forget that there is only a difference of one year in our ages, and that I am old enough to direct my own proceedings."

"Harry," replied his cousin in a tone of deep feeling, "this assumed indifference is infinitely more painful to me than your anger. I say assumed, for I cannot believe even now, that you are so lost to all that is good, and noble, and just, as to harbour the black design of which your own lips have accused you. But if it be so, remember, that not only shall your infamous project be thwarted,—not only shall you be exposed to the hatred and derision of all good men; but the moment which brings home to you the justice of the charge, shall be the last of our acquaintance. Speak out at once, then, and let me hear from your own lips that you are still what I have hitherto believed you,—impetuous and volatile, and perhaps wayward at times,—but not a villain."

This address seemed for a moment to produce some effect upon the individual to whom it was directed; but the softer feelings which struggled for ascendency, soon ceased to work. Pride, or a worse passion, maintained its ground. "I am not aware," replied he after a brief pause, "upon what plea you make this demand, or how you can establish the right to enforce it; and I am not in the habit of doing any thing without having ascertained why it should be done. You will therefore excuse me for saying, that I neither will nor can make protestations, the use and object of which are to me equally unknown."

"Then we part company on the spot," replied Oliver, turning round as he spoke:—"I will not so far forget what is due to myself, as again to be seen in Mr. Morgan's house as the companion of one who leaves me to suspect that he meditates the destruction of his host's domestic peace. I return to the lines."

"Please yourself, good cousin," said Harry in a tone of assumed gaiety. "Unless you choose to make yourself more agreeable than you have

yet done since we set out, the sooner we part company the better."

He, too, turned round as he spoke; and without so much as wishing one another good morning, the relatives separated. Thus was a day of anticipated pleasure suddenly overcast, and the friendship of an entire life-time seriously, if not irretrievably interrupted by the occurrences of a single hour.

CHAPTER II.

It was with a tardy step and a heavy heart, that Oliver Beckwith, at the conclusion of the scene just described, directed his course towards the lines at Kingsbridge. For a moment or two after parting from his wayward relative, a sense of outraged rectitude, if not of wounded pride, served to reconcile him to what had passed; but as the distance between him and the offender increased, his indignation gradually subsided, till at last a feeling diametrically opposed to that which had caused the quarrel, arose within him. Had not he himself been somewhat too hasty? Was it fair to conclude from a mere passing remark—a remark uttered too in a tone which sufficiently indicated that the speaker either spoke not his real sentiments,

or desired that these sentiments should not be noticed,—was it fair to conclude upon such evidence, that the friend of his youth, the very brother of his affections, was become all at once unworthy of the regard which had hitherto been lavished upon him? There was not a solitary act in the whole of his cousin's past career which authorized him to charge him now with a design so hellish as the deliberate seduction of the daughter of his preserver. True, Harry was a bit of a libertine,—that is to say, he was one of those who set not a higher value than it merited, upon woman's fair fame,—and who scrupled not to indulge his own inclinations as often as happy opportunity and fortunate circumstances permitted. On more than one occasion he had been accused of something like foul play towards females who were supposed to have confided too fondly in him; and his influence over the sex was such as an extremely captivating exterior, with manners more than usually attractive, may be supposed to give. But as far as Oliver's inquiries went, in all such cases the fault had been at least as great on the one side as on the other; nor was there an in-

stance, within his knowledge, of any thing like art or deceit having been employed to bring about that which appeared to happen in the ordinary course of events. If the gentleman was somewhat pressing, the lady generally proved to have been any thing but backward in meeting his advances; and thus the blame of the affair might at least be attributed in full proportion to the one as well as to the other. But of an act of base and deliberate villainy Harry had never yet been found guilty: was it therefore probable that he would make his *debut* in a line so despicable, under circumstances like the present? The thing was not to be credited for a minute. Oliver had wronged his cousin, wronged him cruelly and barbarously—it was not surprising that an honourable youth accused of a design of which he was utterly incapable, should become too indignant even to contradict it.

Such were the young man's reflections as he walked slowly and painfully towards the point, from which, little more than an hour ago, he had sallied forth so joyously. Nor, when all the circumstances of the case are taken into considera-

tion, is it by any means surprising that his thoughts should have run into this channel. It has been stated that at this stage of the American war, the British officers stationed within the lines at New York were in the constant habit of making incursions, not always the best regulated, into the Neutral Ground. From the time of his first arrival to join Sir H. Clinton's corps, Harry Beckwith was noted for the daring perseverance with which he indulged in these perilous expeditions. A keen sportsman both with the gun and rod,—a youth, too, of more than ordinary courage, the suggestion that an enemy's patrol was abroad, or a party of Skinners on the range, seemed only to send him with double zest upon his pleasurable excursion. What cared he for the Yankeys? They had never yet crossed his path, nor was it probable that they would; but if they did, he had very little apprehension that his heels would not always be capable of taking care of his head. Besides, the whole world knew that if there was one sound more terrific than another in Jonathan's estimation, it was the blast of a British bugle; and as he never went abroad without

a little instrument of the kind suspended round his neck, he was satisfied that it rested with himself to put a whole continental battalion to flight at any moment. Thus reasoning, or rather thus meeting with ill-placed raillery the arguments of his brother officers, Beckwith persisted in following his own devices; and he pursued them for a time with such impunity as gradually to satisfy even the most cautious, that the youth was really not so giddy or so headstrong as they had supposed.

At first, as usually happens in such cases, Harry Beckwith's excursions were neither so bold, nor so extensive, as he represented them to be. The village of East Chester formed, for the most part, the extreme landmark, beyond which he ventured not to stray; whilst to penetrate as far as Rye, was regarded as an undertaking of no common hardihood. But as day after day passed by, without bringing before him any appearance of danger in reality, the little prudence which had hitherto directed his movements ceased to operate; and he wandered on far beyond the reach of assistance from his friends, or the possibility of escape by any

personal exertions from his enemies. The White Plains were now traversed in search of quails and partridges; Stamford and Philipsbourg received frequent visits; and even the Crotin occasionally witnessed the skill with which he could hook and bring to land its finny inhabitants; till at last there was not much of exaggeration in his assertion, that he knew every foot of ground between the Royal pickets and Washington's outposts at Peekskill. It was on one of these occasions that he was indebted for his safety to the kindness of a stranger,—to the father of the very girl, concerning his designs upon whom the late discussion between his relative and himself had occurred.

It is not necessary to give a very detailed account of this adventure; let it suffice to state, that having strayed considerably beyond his ordinary bounds, Beckwith found himself suddenly encompassed by flying parties from the American army, of whose approach the wooded and uneven nature of the country hindered him from becoming aware. He was busily engaged with his rod, on the bank of a little rivulet, which wound through the bottom of one of

those exquisite valleys that give a character to the scenery in the neighbourhood of Bedford. Two gentle hills leaning apart the one from the other, and feathered to their summits with birch and locust trees, closed in that glen on either hand; whilst here and there a ledge of rock, or a patch of underwood, interposing both above and below, rendered the prospect from any given spot extremely limited. It was only the sound of their voices indeed, and the trampling of horses' hoofs, which warned Beckwith of the approach of the American foragers; and he had barely time to screen himself in one of the thickets already referred to, when a body of several hundred men, with a multitude of led horses and cars, swept by.

Harry Beckwith was at this moment upwards of ten long miles from the nearest British post. The troops which had just passed him, were clearly about to spread themselves over the entire face of the district, through which, in the event of his endeavouring to return, it would be necessary to travel; whilst an occasional roll of drums and sounding of trumpets in different directions closer at hand, showed that it was but a de-

tachment from a corps which occupied every outlet from the valley. Thus situated, the young man was at no loss to discover, first, that his chances of escape were extremely meagre, and secondly, that there remained for him no other course to pursue, except to lie still in his hiding-place, and wait the result. But this hope, slender as it was, was speedily taken away from him. One of the baggage animals happening to break loose from its leader, at the moment when the rear of the column was skirting the wood, plunged directly into the thicket, and, as bad luck would have it, made for the very spot where the young Englishman lay ensconced. It was followed, as a matter of course, by half a dozen of the guard, who were not slow in starting other game, besides that of which they came in pursuit; and Harry, driven from his lair, found that now, at length, that speed of foot of which he had so frequently boasted, must be put to the test.

It was well for Beckwith at this critical moment that the foragers, in their eagerness to rid themselves of all incumbrances, had left their muskets behind. Had the contrary been the case,

his race and life would have been, in all probability, cut short together; but having a fair field before him, and being in truth an exceedingly active young man, he soon gave his first pursuers the slip, and cast a considerable interval between them. The alarm, however, instantly spread; bugles sounded, men shouted, and horse and foot were in hot and desperate chase in every direction. Beckwith ran with all the speed of which he was master, making at once for the brow of the hill; and he gained it, though not till the whistling of several bullets past his ear warned him that his course was traced; when, plunging into a sort of open wood, which skirted its opposite side, he turned short round, and took a direction immediately up the valley. To that measure, adopted without thought and at random, his preservation was entirely owing. There was a ravine before him, dark with brambles and stunted filbert-trees, of the depth or extent of which it was impossible to form any judgment; and without a moment's hesitation he leaped into it. Though the leap was both a desperate and a fearful one, it was productive of no mischievous consequences. His fall,

broken by the interposing branches, though many feet in height, was a soft one, and he rolled unhurt to the bottom of the gorge, where a complete screen of foliage covered him. There he lay for some minutes, listening with painful anxiety to the shouts and execrations of his pursuers, who, ignorant of the step which he had taken, still swept onwards over the hill, till their voices became gradually more and more indistinct, and at last ceased entirely to be heard.

Having remained perfectly still for several minutes, Beckwith ventured at last to rise, and look round upon the friendly cleft to which he was indebted for his safety. It was a wild and rugged cut, the edges of which presented an appearance as if the hill had been torn asunder at no very remote period by the violence of an earthquake. Bushes and low shrubs were indeed numerous, especially towards the summit, which threw their branches here and there from one side of the ravine to the other, and caused the fissure itself to rest in deep gloom; but these grew out of some rocky protuberances, or perpendicular banks of red sand, which seemed as if

they would at once reunite, were it possible to bring them by any application of force together. From the summit to the base, this singular ravine might measure perhaps from sixty to eighty feet; nor was it without a shudder that Beckwith contemplated the escape which he had made from utter destruction in his daring plunge. But if the plunge had been a desperate one, it led, at least, to a place of concealment more secure than any other exertions on his part could have discovered. No man not under the influence of violent excitement, would venture to follow the example which he had set; and as the excitement of the individual who follows seldom equals that of the fugitive for life, there was slight risk that any of his pursuers would take the leap which he had taken. Besides he had the satisfaction to know that he had gained his present lurking-place unnoticed, and the happy position of the place itself afforded the best ground of hope that no one would dream of exploring it in search of him. Thus re-assured, he began once again to breathe with something like freedom; whilst at the same time he resolved to rest

quietly where he was till sufficient time should be granted for the enemy to become weary of a quest, to guide them in which no clue was afforded.

He had just made up his mind to act upon this plan, when all his dreams of fancied security were again dissolved. There came a sound of voices upon his ear, whence proceeding he scarcely knew how to surmise; but fear, which is always suspicious, suggested that his covert must be less inaccessible than he had believed it to be. He listened with breathless attention; laid his ear to the ground that he might catch the sound more distinctly; and then, convinced that the speakers were not above, but on a level with himself, he once more took to his heels. Dashing along the ravine, he soon arrived at its extremity, and the open and cultivated country was again before him. Beckwith was now desperate. He saw, or fancied that he saw, horsemen riding about in every direction; each movement of the leaves behind him told a tale of pursuers close at hand; whilst his farther flight, if it were prosecuted at all, must be made across a plain,

where the most minute object could from any of the neighbouring heights be observed. Like other men in desperate circumstances, he determined to cast all upon the hazard of a die. There was a mansion immediately under the hill, the architecture and general style of which denoted it to be the residence of a gentleman; and Beckwith resolved at once to make for it, and throw himself upon the generosity of its owner. He did so. The house was the abode of Mr. Morgan, a man of some consequence before the troubles began, and even now respected, as far as a neutral can be, by the leading men on both sides of the question; and Harry Beckwith found that whatever his political sentiments might be, he was at all events a person of honour and right feeling. Mr. Morgan received his unwelcome guest, if not with open arms, still kindly. He readily furnished the asylum which was sought, and concealing him in a hay-loft, kept him there till the foraging party had withdrawn. Nor was the risk run in so doing slight. The American troops, having already searched his house, did not indeed re-examine it with the minuteness

which characterized their first inquiries; but during the whole of that day they hovered round it as if they anticipated that their quarry would yet appear in its vicinity. Now, as the arrival of the stranger could not be concealed from any inmate in the house, Mr. Morgan, no less than Beckwith, remained all that while at the mercy of his very slaves, the treachery of one of whom must have brought the necks both of the fugitive and his preserver into jeopardy. Happily, however, there were as yet no traitors among them. After remaining some hours in no very enviable state of mind, Harry was made happy by the announcement that the coast was clear, and that it rested with himself either to make his way back at once to the British lines, or to partake the hospitality of his preserver during the night.

There were many reasons which induced Beckwith not to decline the invitation thus implied. In the first place, having deviated widely from any track with which he was familiar, there was little chance of his finding his way across the Neutral Ground in the dark; whilst a powerful feeling of bodily fatigue gave

notice that he was in no condition for commencing a long and toilsome journey. In the next place, his nerves were too much shaken to leave him as much master of himself as a man would desire to be, who sees before him the prospect of a hazardous enterprise. It was true that the main body of the enemy were withdrawn; but how could he tell whether straggling parties might not yet be abroad? to escape from, or contend with whom, he felt himself to be in no condition. Nor, to do him justice, were other and less grossly selfish motives wanting to direct his conduct. He lay under the most serious obligations to his host; he was anxious to impress the man who had thus generously treated him, with a favourable impression of his protegé; and he knew that as yet no opportunity of so doing had presented itself. On all these accounts he thankfully closed with Mr. Morgan's alternative of continuing his guest during the night; and, as such, he was led by his kind host to the parlour.

Mr. Morgan's family consisted, besides himself, of two children, a son and a daughter. The boy was a graceful, intelligent, and apparently

an amiable youth, whose age could not exceed fifteen or sixteen years. The girl was by two years his senior, and a more perfect specimen of feminine loveliness, it were no easy matter to point out. Her figure, under rather than above the ordinary stature, was cast in a mould of the most exquisite symmetry; her light brown hair, as yet uncontaminated by the application of powder, hung in rich and natural ringlets over her shoulders. Eyes of the softest and sweetest blue, a complexion transparently bright, and a mouth small, pouting, and set with rows of purest ivory, combined to produce a countenance upon which no one could gaze with indifference; whilst a manner frank, yet modest, and though playful, totally devoid of levity, insured a continuance of that admiration, which even a passing glance never failed to excite. Nor were her external beauties, either of form or manner, at variance with the feelings of her heart. There never breathed a girl of gentler disposition, or more honourable sentiments, than Cecily Morgan: warm-hearted, generous, affectionate, and confiding, the last being whose happiness she appeared to consult,

was herself; indeed, her happiness may be said to have arisen entirely from a contemplation of the happiness of those among whom she dwelt. It is scarcely necessary to add after this, that Cecily was an object of positive adoration to her father, who watched all her movements, and lived upon her smiles, more like an impassioned lover than a parent.

It would have been something extraordinary, had Harry Beckwith, a professed admirer of female beauty, failed to be powerfully struck with the extreme loveliness of this unsophisticated girl. Finer women he had doubtless beheld,—women of more commanding carriage and fashionable address; but upon a creature more perfectly loveable than this artless American maiden, his eye had never before rested. Nor is it to be wondered at, if the open and manly countenance of Beckwith, his graceful figure and gentlemanlike manners, should have produced a somewhat similar impression on Cecily.

From what has been said of Mr. Morgan's political conduct, it will be surmised, that for some years back he kept up little or no intercourse with the busy world; and hence the

only male society to which his daughter had been accustomed since her arrival at the period of opening womanhood, was almost exclusively confined to the members of her own family. To her, therefore, the conversation of a sprightly stranger presented more than ordinary attractions from its novelty; whilst the peculiarity of the circumstances which had introduced them to one another, seemed to place them at once, and without the slightest breach of decorum, on a footing of perfect intimacy. Nor was Beckwith either insensible to the privileges which these circumstances conferred, or remiss in availing himself of them. On the contrary, as he felt strongly, so he expressed himself openly and warmly; and his desire to show that he was not ungrateful for the kindness which he had received, rendered him at once an object of fresh interest in the eyes of his preservers.

What remains to be told of the events which occurred previous to the opening of my story, may be related in few words. The little party broke up, not however till a late hour, mutually delighted with one another; and the Englishman departed next day, carrying with

him the best wishes of his generous entertainers. He reached the lines in safety, his absence from which for so long a period had created no little alarm; and he resumed his career of blended duty and amusement, as if no adventure more memorable than usual had occurred. But Beckwith's thoughts often wandered back to the sylph-like creature with whom he had so strangely been brought into acquaintance. He saw her soft blue eyes beaming upon him in his dreams by night, and in his busiest thoughts by day; the rich clear tones of her musical voice vibrated in his ears at all moments of his sleeping and waking existence, till the vision became, as the poet expresses it, "a portion of himself." The consequences which followed, were exactly such as may be anticipated. First came a species of internal discussion as to the possibility of seeing her again; this was shortly succeeded by a conclusion, that the attempt might at least be hazarded; and the lapse of a single week found him once more equipped as a sportsman, but bent upon an object very different from the destruction of game. On that occasion, he was accompanied

by his cousin Oliver, to whom he communicated no more than the general outlines of his late adventure; and who was easily persuaded to believe that his generous-hearted relative thrust his life again into danger for the purpose of proving that he was not ungrateful to the man who had once preserved it. Nor was the enterprise attended by any perilous, or even troublesome consequences. The young men made their way to Belmont, the name of Mr. Morgan's plantation, without the smallest interruption from the enemy. They were received with the warmth of an old established friendship; and treated with the open hospitality, for the exercise of which the American gentry were then remarkable; and they returned to their quarters equally delighted with the excursion, and equally disposed to repeat it on the first convenient opportunity.

From that period up to the date of the misunderstanding just described, this romantic intimacy, on the part at least of the younger of the cousins, continued, in spite of an increasing jealousy displayed by the Republican leaders, and multiplied risks into which it led the adven-

turer. His escapes were both numerous and narrow; yet he did escape, without, as was believed, bringing the slightest suspicion upon his friends; nor did the fate of André itself operate to deter him from following a course, the true motive to which could no longer be concealed. On more than one occasion that motive had been alluded to by Oliver, in terms which proved the reverse of agreeable to the person warned; but it was not till the morning with which my tale commences, that the relatives came to any open or decided explanation on the subject. How that explanation was brought about I have already stated; and it now remains to give an account of the consequences which arose out of it.

CHAPTER III.

I HAVE said that Oliver Beckwith pursued his homeward career in a frame of mind widely different from that which attended him when he sallied forth. At first, indeed, it might be doubted whether the satisfaction arising from a consciousness of having done his duty, did not more than compensate for the pain which attended its performance. Doubtless, it was not without a pang of keen and heartfelt regret, that he saw himself under the necessity of breaking with a man in whose society he had hitherto experienced the liveliest satisfaction; but on the other hand, the ground of quarrel was of such a nature as his judgment could not fail to approve, and when judgment and mere feeling stood opposed the

one to the other, there was no scope for hesitation as to which it behoved him to obey. This consideration served exceedingly well to keep under his rebellious yearnings, whilst yet the sound of his cousin's retiring footsteps were heard; but these no sooner died away in the distance, than other thoughts began to arise, which he found it easier to call into view than to dismiss again. Was not Harry's capricious temper well known to him? Had not the experience of a life-time served to convince him, that though his relative might be led into any course of acting, by no violence physical or moral would he submit to be driven; and hence, that whatever his designs might be, a very erroneous method, to call it by no harsher name, had been adopted for the purpose of diverting him from them. Besides, what man of honour could endure to be catechised concerning a piece of deliberate villainy, of which his own conscience acquitted him? or why should it excite surprise that a youth of peculiarly sensitive constitution, should refuse to satisfy doubts, the very existence of which was to him an insult. The more Oliver considered these

matters, the firmer became his conviction, that in every point of view he had himself acted with precipitation; till at last a powerful impulse prompted him to turn back in search of his cousin, that, if he did not own himself wholly in the wrong, he might at least explain away certain phrases which he now heartily repented that in his violence he had employed.

There cannot be a doubt that had Oliver Beckwith arrived at this determination in sufficient time to permit its being carried into immediate execution, the cousins would have forgotten at once the petty disagreement of the morning, and become on the spot as warm friends as ever. Unfortunately, however, this was not the case. Constitutionally cautious, Oliver was one of those who are not, in general, easily ruffled; but his mind, like others of the same description, could not, when once disturbed, rub down its asperities, and attain to a reasonable tone in a moment. The consequence was, that a much greater space of time had elapsed while he was thus debating with himself, than he could have possibly imagined; and hence the means of acting, when at last

the necessity to act had been ascertained, were taken away. Oliver turned round to follow his relative, but not a trace of his relative was to be seen; he strained his eyes over a country remarkably open and level, yet he strained them for no purpose, till, believing that the opportunity was lost of doing the thing as he knew that it ought to be done, he determined, for the present at least, not to do it at all. He accordingly resumed once more his homeward course, and passing the outposts, stole away by the rear of the cantonments, like one who had committed a crime, to his own quarters within the lines.

There are certain moods of the mind which, though abundantly unpleasant in themselves, seldom take their departure except to make way for others still more disagreeable. Oliver Beckwith, for example, entered his chamber, dissatisfied with himself, and hardly reconciled to the cause of that dissatisfaction; he had not occupied it many minutes, when these feelings began to subside, and an anxiety, for which he could not very well account, arose in their room. First of all, he thought of his cousin,—but it was neither in anger nor in sorrow,—it was

with a vague and undefined conviction that some heavy calamity hung over him, from which he, had he not chosen absurdly to pick a quarrel, might have shielded him. By and by there arose the image of Cecily Morgan, not as she had been seen but a few hours before, shrinking from the contaminating touch of a libertine, but in all the simplicity and loveliness of the original, when first the eye of the dreamer rested upon her. I have hitherto spoken of Oliver Beckwith merely as a cautious and upright young man,—as a person not only incapable of perpetrating a dishonourable action, but too prudent to permit feeling to exert any influence over his actions. It is extremely probable that in thus expressing myself, I have conveyed to your minds some very erroneous impressions of my old acquaintance. Though certainly not the slave of impulse, like his cousin,—though undeniably prudent, correct, perhaps blameably calculating, Oliver Beckwith was nevertheless made up of the common ingredients which constitute human nature ; and like other beings so formed, he was not insensible to the influence of passion, though usually com-

petent to hold it in its right place—in other words, subservient to the dictates of reason. Like his more inflammable relative, he had not, from the first, been insensible to the many attractions which Cecily Morgan presented. He saw in her the perfect personification of all that his fancy had ever depicted of the gentle and attractive in women; and if he loved her not with the violence which characterised the passion of his headstrong cousin, he at least entertained for her as much of ardent affection as it was in his nature to experience. But Oliver was under no circumstances so far ingrossed by the workings of natural feeling, as to be blind to the consequences likely to arise out of their indulgence. In the present instance, for example, he applied to himself the very same arguments which he has been represented as applying to Harry; and he soon reasoned himself into the persuasion that something more than prudence—that justice, as well to the girl as to himself, required that he should think of her no more. Nor let it be concealed, that in the formation of a resolution never to address her in the language of love, other and not less ge-

nerous considerations had weight. He saw with the perspicacity which for the most part attaches to men so situated, that to Harry, equally as to himself, Cecily Morgan was an object of admiration. He soon discovered likewise, that in the society of Harry she appeared more happy, at all events more elated, than in his own; and this observation led at once to a conviction that on Harry she had already bestowed the richest of all gifts — her virgin heart. Now Oliver Beckwith was one of those who could not understand how a man may find gratification in any thing which lacerates the heart-strings of those around him; and hence the bare suspicion that Cecily loved another, would have been of itself sufficient to hinder him from making to her a tender of his hand. Partly, therefore, because his sound judgment told him that he was in no situation to marry, partly because he believed that the girl's affections were already engaged, Oliver not only never addressed her otherwise than in the language of friendship, but struggled, and not wholly without success, to regard her as a friend merely. She became to him a sister, in whose wel-

fare he took the liveliest and purest interest; but she either was, or he persuaded himself that she was, nothing more.

In spite, however, of these noble and manly resolutions, there were moments when the thought of her as the property of another, came upon him with the agony of a diseased dream. Perhaps it was because he was not unaware of his cousin's sentiments, that Harry bore with so ill a grace the jokes which Oliver from time to time thought fit to pass upon him. Perhaps, too, a secret consciousness that all was not as it ought to have been in his own bosom, caused Oliver himself to infuse more of bitterness than he needed to have done into his remarks; and hence, in all probability, arose the irritation which ensued almost as often as the name of Cecily Morgan chanced to be pronounced between them. Be this as it may on other occasions, nothing can be more certain than that, in the quarrel which had of late taken place, this consciousness on both sides proved particularly operative; whilst it is equally beyond a doubt, that in the minds of both, after they separated,

it continued to exert its influence to an exceedingly painful degree. Even now Oliver found himself its slave. True, he had determined never to allow a thought of his cousin's better fortune to interfere with the friendship which had so long existed between them. Having voluntarily resigned all claim upon the girl, it would have been absolute insanity to act otherwise; yet when he reflected on the assurance with which his favoured rival spoke of a treasure which he, doubtless, valued the more, from the conviction that by himself it was unattainable, his indignation knew no bounds, and jealousy, or something not far removed from it, took possession of his entire soul. Thus was he alternately the prey of contending feelings, all of them more turbulent and impetuous than he had hitherto been accustomed to experience; till his very frame began at last to feel the effect of the tumult within, and he became feverish, restless, and uneasy.

Oliver Beckwith was thus circumstanced, when the sound of his own name, pronounced in the voice of a brother officer, broke in upon his reverie. As he happened at the moment to

be sitting beside the window, an immediate opportunity of gratifying the curiosity which had been excited, he knew not how, presented itself. He drew back the lattice, and looking out, desired to be informed, why he had been made the subject of his friends' conversation. A shout of satisfaction from a group of young men who stood beneath answered to this inquiry.

"Thank God! Beckwith," exclaimed one, "that you are here. No doubt you were warned at the pickets how matters stood. But where is Harry?"

"For Heaven's sake," replied Oliver, "what is it you mean? I received no warning at the pickets,—I am here purely by accident; and if any thing be wrong, then is poor Harry sacrificed."

"Heaven forbid!" answered his comrades in a breath. "Surely Harry is with you." They all ran as they spoke towards his door, and in a moment stood around him in the apartment.

"Did you not go abroad together?" exclaimed the individual who had first spoke.

"Yes!" answered Oliver, "we went abroad

together; but my inclination to wander quitted me, God knows why, whereas Harry has gone on, and will not return before evening."

There was a silence of some moments' duration at the close of this speech; during which the young men looked at one another with an expression sufficiently indicative of the painful interest with which they had listened to it. At last, one of them, as if desirous of comforting both himself and those about him, remarked, that possibly things might not be as the spy had represented; and that, even if it were so, Harry Beckwith had escaped so many hazards, that no one ought to despair of him until his death or capture had been ascertained.

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" exclaimed Oliver, "this is all a mystery to me, and surely you know me well enough to be aware, that, by preserving it, you only keep me on the rack. In the name of fortune, what do you mean? What spy has come in? what news has he brought? and to what fresh dangers has my thoughtless and imprudent relative exposed himself?"

"To be plain, then," replied one of the group, "a deserter has just arrived with the most important information that has yet been communicated concerning the enemy's movements. Washington, reinforced by ten thousand Frenchmen, has been for some days arranging a plan of general assault upon our lines; and this night, or to-morrow morning at the latest, the attack is expected to be made. When the deserter left Peekskill, a heavy column of infantry, supported by cavalry and artillery, was arriving, at the head of which marched Washington himself; and hence, beyond a doubt, the whole of the Neutral Ground is either occupied already, or will be occupied in force before dark. But this is not all. A numerous flotilla has been fitted out at Newhaven, for the purpose of throwing a force in our rear, at the moment when the main column shall engage us in front; whilst fire-vessels, torpedoes, and I know not how many horrid instruments besides, are to be let down the stream of the Hudson's, in order to distract our attention. Every thing, too, seems to be credited by those at the head of affairs; for the greatest pre-

parations have been making to meet the danger. The garrison at this point has been strengthened by a thousand Hessians; our fleet of whale-boats is ready for sea, supported by several launches and men of war cutters which have made their way into the Sound; and a detachment of troops is ordered to hold itself in readiness to embark at a moment's notice. You see, therefore, that there is strong ground to congratulate yourself on your opportune return, let the cause be what it may; whilst for poor Harry, active and brave though he be, our hopes are, and must be, very slender."

Oliver listened to this detail with the sensations of a man who has heard a story which, but for some solitary though vitally important omission, would be in every particular gratifying. There was nothing for which he, in common with the army at large, so ardently sighed, as that one party or the other would bring affairs to the issue of a battle; and hence the announcement that the event so much desired was really on the eve of its occurrence, could not fail to excite in him the liveliest satisfaction. But the pleasure thence arising was dashed by no ordi-

nary sorrow, when he thought of the present situation and future prospects of his relative. That Harry would escape again as he had escaped before, even the most sanguine could not venture to anticipate. It was not to be believed, that the frequent visits which he had made to Belmont, should have passed entirely unnoticed at the American head-quarters, because it was not to be expected that a numerous body of slaves and dependents, such as that which surrounded Mr. Morgan, were to a man trustworthy. Now should the enemy really advance that day, taking Belmont, as they must take it, in their route; and should the owner of Belmont be an object of suspicion, or one of his domestics prove a traitor, the strictest search would of course be made for British stragglers; and any straggler found under circumstances so unfavourable, could hardly expect to be treated otherwise than as a spy. What had a British officer to do at a point many miles in advance of his own advanced sentries? And why, if the mere spirit of adventure led him thither, appear without his uniform? Oliver shuddered as these reflections rose into his

mind. The fate of André, though long past, was not yet forgotten, more especially by those to whom that unfortunate officer had been known; and Oliver, who happened to be of the number, trembled as the idea forced itself upon his notice, that in all human probability the fate of his relative would be similar.

It was well for the young man's feelings at this distressing juncture, that a sudden rolling of drums and sounding of bugles called off his attention to other and more urgent business. As there was no mistaking the nature of these sounds, the little coterie which had hitherto kept together, broke up in a moment; and Oliver was left alone to exchange his shooting-dress for the uniform of his regiment: nor was any great space of time expended in performing that task. When the drum or bugle summons to real service, the niceties of parade are, as I need not remind you, but little thought of; and though Oliver was on ordinary occasions abundantly particular, on the present he paid attention to essentials only. In five minutes his toilette was completed, his sabre buckled to his side, and his pistols in his belt; and then, with a

hurried step and flashing eye, he sallied forth to place himself at the head of his company.

Though no tyro in military affairs, Oliver Beckwith imagined that he had never beheld a more striking military spectacle than now met him. Soldiers of all arms, cavalry, infantry, artillery, and riflemen, were hurrying to their several alarm posts; mounted officers were riding backwards and forwards; some coming from the rear to the front, others hastening from the front to the rear; thousands of voices spoke, neither loudly nor tumultuously, but in suppressed tones, and brief exclamations; whilst every countenance appeared to be lighted up with the fire of expectation. This state of things was not, however, of long continuance. As each individual knew well the particular spot to which, in case of alarm, it behoved him to repair, all were in their places within the space of a few moments; and then the most profound silence, and the strictest order, reigned from one extremity of the lines to the other.

It is hardly necessary for me to state, that the lines in question, known indifferently as the post of Kingsbridge and Morrisiana, occupied

a narrow neck of land, which is washed on one side by the waters of the Hudson's, on the other by a deep protrusion or bay of the Sound. The works themselves, which might measure perhaps a quarter of a mile in extent, consisted of a stockaded redoubt, a breastwork, and an open battery; and were surmounted by fifteen pieces of cannon, principally of heavy calibre. Of these, three looked towards the river; two flanked the ditch from the left; six were in the redoubt; and the remainder *en barbette* along the parapet; and all were at this moment attended by their due proportion of gunners, each with a lighted fuse in his hand. The infantry, again, which consisted of four regular regiments, two of these being Germans, with a corps, or rather six independent companies of Loyalist refugees, stood, the latter in open files along the breastwork, the former in close columns of battalions upon the flanks; whilst a squadron of irregular cavalry with three light field-pieces, was drawn up in rear of the centre, at the distance of some two hundred yards from the people which they covered. Oliver had ample time to scan these several preparations;

for though the troops stood like men in momentary expectation of a move, minute after minute stole on, without bringing into view any adequate cause for such excitement. In front, upon the Sound, and on the river, all seemed quiet; and the opposite bank of the latter remained, as it was accustomed to do, unoccupied either by Americans or British. At last, a feeling of disappointment, or to speak more accurately, symptoms of men's nerves becoming gradually unstrung, began to exhibit themselves in all directions. Questions were put as to the necessity of acting as they had done; something like murmuring was heard, that the enemy did not come on; and there was a wavering in the ranks which showed that the soldiers were weary of continuing on the alert against a danger which approached not. The officer in command was not slow to detect this; nor did he treat it otherwise than as became him. The word was passed from battalion to battalion to pile arms; and the men having been strictly cautioned not to straggle, were permitted to fall out.

Things were in this state, and the low po-

sition of the sun in the sky gave warning that day was drawing rapidly to a close, when a sentinel, who kept watch in the battery that faced the Hudson's, called aloud that something moved upon the river. Oliver, who happened to be lying down not far from the man's post, instantly sprang to his feet, and gazing in the direction towards which the soldier pointed, beheld plainly enough that the alarm was not a false one. At as great a distance up the stream as the eye could very well reach, the Hudson's appeared to be covered with boats; but in what direction moving, or whether moving at all, it was impossible to say. The circumstance was, however, too important to be permitted to pass unheeded. Though no immediate change in the order issued took place, all ranks became in consequence once more on the *qui vive;* nor did many minutes elapse ere another event occurred, not less calculated than this to rekindle their slumbering excitement

Numerous groups both of men and officers were assembled in the battery, and numerous glasses were turned upon the objects of curiosity, when a solitary musket-shot in the di-

rection of the pickets was heard. For an instant men seemed to take the alarm; they faced about as soon as the report caught their ears, and exhibited a disposition to resume their ranks; but as the shot was not followed by others, they gradually ceased to regard it, and once more became careless and sluggish. An interval of perhaps a quarter of an hour now occurred, during which the sun sank with the abruptness which in the western hemisphere marks his departure; and twilight came on, not, as in this country, slowly and beautifully, but darkly and at once. Had nothing farther taken place, the approach of night, situated as the garrison of Kingsbridge was, would have caused of itself the troops to draw closer to their arms; but the last glimmer of day had not yet departed, ere the expectation of an immediate attack was renewed. First one, then two muskets, then a long rattle as if an entire section had fired, broke in upon the silence; these were speedily followed by the boom of a cannon; and in the next instant the whole line of pickets, which covered the front of the position, was engaged. Now, then, all was hurry and excitation. There was a cry

from right to left of "Stand to your arms!" The bugles sounded, the drums beat, the troopers mounted their horses, and the artillerymen stood to their guns; whilst officers in command of corps rode furiously along the rear, giving directions for the battalions to form. All this, however, was done in less time than I have taken in describing it. The corps were again under arms, the riflemen were again spread along the parapet, all in the space of a few seconds; and the word 'Silence!' uttered in the well-known tones of their leaders, was alone heard through the British ranks. That command, at all times important, but doubly so in circumstances like these, was obeyed even to the very letter; and every individual, whilst he held his very breath through intensity of expectation, became absorbed in contemplating the progress of the contest which went on in front.

The night was now as dark as pitch; for the moon was not yet risen, and a collection of heavy clouds coming suddenly up from the north-east, at once obscured the stars, and gave warning of a storm. Nothing, therefore, could be seen of the combatants except the flashing

of their muskets, which, as the people engaged were spread over a considerable space of ground, produced a remarkably brilliant and interesting effect. The whole extent of what appeared to be the horizon, was thus marked by a line of fire,—not continuous and regular, but broken and interrupted, like that which a flight of fire-flies produces in a tropical climate, or like the sparks from a smith's anvil when he is beating a bar of hot iron. Then, again, the rattle was not in volleys, as when one compact line stands opposed to another, but scattering and unequal, sufficiently indicating that the force on both sides consisted of skirmishers merely, whatever might be the nature of the support on which they leaned. Nor did it fail to excite the surprise of all who watched the issue, that by neither party was any decided advantage gained; the pickets on the one hand maintaining their ground bravely, whilst the assailants on the other were not repulsed. The number of wounded, too, who came in from time to time, was scarcely adequate to what might have been expected from a fire so lengthened; whilst the rumours which they circulated were all vague

and indefinite, leading to no rational conclusion as to the ultimate intentions of the enemy. One man, for example, affirmed that he had seen a heavy column moving down the Philipsbourg road; another that the Stamford road was covered with troops; whilst a third protested that there was no column in the field, but only a body of skirmishers, whose design appeared to extend no farther than to keep the attention of the British garrison alive. It was natural that reports so contradictory should perplex the officer in command not a little; and he determined to satisfy his doubts by sending out a strong reconnoitring party. For this purpose he gave directions that two companies from the regiment on the left should push forward to the support of the pickets; and Oliver Beckwith happening to be the first of his rank for command, the task of leading them on devolved upon him.

As his instructions particularly directed him to ascertain, if possible, upon what the enemy's light troops leaned, Oliver determined not to throw his own people into extended order, but, pressing forward in column, to scour the Philips-

bourg road, till he should fall upon the head of the support which was supposed to rest there. That he might effect this, likewise, with as little annoyance as possible, he caused his men to advance in a tumultuous and disorderly manner, rattling their cartouch boxes, stepping heavily on the ground, and creating as much noise as if a whole brigade were in motion. Whether the stratagem produced its desired effect, or whether the enemy, having already amused themselves to their heart's content, were prepared to withdraw, I cannot say; but before Beckwith came up with the line of pickets, the firing had ceased. The enemy had fallen back as suddenly as they came on, leaving no parties behind to cover them; and though Oliver pushed forward at a brisk pace, sending flankers out in every direction, he failed to overtake them. Satisfied from this, that the late attack had been a false one, he returned at once to the line of outposts; where, after sending back a subaltern with a full report to headquarters, he prepared, in obedience to his orders, to pass the night.

As it was especially required of Oliver and

his party, not so much to reinforce, as to support the pickets, he took post in a ruined house, about half way between them and the works, and at nearly equal distances from the river on the one hand, and the Sound on the other. From this point patroles were continually sent out, which, pushing from extremity to extremity, ascertained that all was safe between, and that no man was inattentive to the vitally important trust which his situation imposed on him. For a time, these excursions were productive of no remarkable results; and the night being mild though lowering, they went off without murmurs on the part of such as performed them; but as the heavy clouds drew more and more into a mass, other prospects were presented, and no great while elapsed ere they were realized. The storm which had so long been gathering, burst, and with a violence, of which the mere European traveller knows nothing. The rain came down, not in heavy drops, but in sheets; the wind rising suddenly to a gale, caused the Sound to lash its shores with the noise of thunder; whilst the thunder itself muttered first angrily at a distance, and then

broke in tremendous peals over-head. Yet the duty of patrolling could not, even for such a storm, be intermitted; indeed the necessity for vigilance only increased, as the tempest increased in fury: and parties were lighted on their road by incessant and vivid flashes of lightning.

It was now that Oliver, the more to encourage his men, took a doubly prominent part in the hardships and privations of the night. Scarcely a patrol sallied forth, of which he failed to put himself at the head; and his example failed not to stir up not merely the admiration, but the emulation of his followers. He had just returned from one of these excursions, drenched, fatigued, and uncomfortable; and having thrown himself down before his watch-fire, was preparing to snatch a few moments of broken sleep, when a sergeant suddenly entered the room to announce that a prisoner had just been made, who knew his name and regiment, and desired particularly to see him. Though there was nothing very remarkable in this, considering the situation which Oliver filled at the moment, still the young man's heart fluttered strangely, as he commanded the

prisoner to be introduced; and he rose himself from the ground to receive him, not without a fearful misgiving, for which he found it impossible at that moment to account. The prisoner came. Oliver examined him closely; but garments soiled and muddy, and a cap drawn closely over the upper part of his face, constituted altogether such a disguise as he found it impossible to penetrate.

"You desired to see me," said Oliver after a pause; "speak out,—what is the nature of your communication?"

"I desired to see you alone," replied the stranger in a voice which, though evidently feigned, Beckwith was satisfied that he had heard before: "I cannot speak out what I have to say before witnesses."

"Sergeant, you may withdraw," exclaimed Oliver; "and now, friend," continued he, as soon as the door closed, "what am I to learn?"

"That which will give you no pleasure!" replied the stranger, at the same time lifting his cap, and exhibiting the features of young Morgan. "Your cousin is a prisoner; my father is taken; Cecily is liable to insult the bit-

terest and the greatest; all is lost if you do not immediately hasten to their assistance. I saw the miscreants bind the hands of both: I heard them declare that both should die the death of traitors to-morrow. Oh! Captain Beckwith, if you possess any love for your relative, any compassion for my unhappy father, or still more, any esteem for me or my miserable sister! do not delay a moment! The force which occupies Belmont is small; there is no support near; and I can lead you by a way which will bring you at once upon them, if you will but follow. For the love of Heaven, do not refuse my petition!"

The young man fell upon his knees as he spoke, and seizing the hand of Oliver, moistened it with his tears. What the latter felt at such a moment, I leave you to guess, whilst I proceed to describe the series of events which brought about the calamity to the detail of which he had just listened.

CHAPTER IV.

If Oliver Beckwith turned his face towards the lines in a disturbed and unhappy frame of mind; his cousin Harry pursued his journey in the opposite direction, in a disposition not much more to be envied. Like his more rigid relative, he found, indeed, consolation for a space in the reflection that he had acted only as became a man of spirit; and that Oliver, by addressing him in the language which he had employed, placed himself at once out of the pale of friendship, far more of relationship. What right had he to assume the air and manner of a superior? Who had constituted him the regulator of other men's proceedings, or authorized him to speak to one, in every respect his equal, as if he were entitled to that indi-

vidual's respectful obedience? The assumption was in the highest degree preposterous; and in meeting it as he had done, he only acted as became him, whether regarded in the light of an officer, or of a gentleman. But, like Oliver, Harry had not walked far before the recollections of other days forced themselves even into the society of thoughts like these; and he began to reflect that he might have met his friend's questions more openly and more explicitly. Nevertheless, Harry Beckwith was a man who seldom or ever condescended to own, even to himself, that he had done absolutely wrong. That he might have done better, he often felt and admitted; and he was rarely backward in meeting more than half-way, such advances as might be made by persons with whom he had quarrelled. But to confess that the blame rested entirely with himself, was a stretch of Christian humility of which he was incapable: and even now, though sorely grieved at the results, he acted pertinaciously up to his usual custom.

Perhaps, too, there were other motives which excited an influence over his mind, and kept it in the irksome and distressing channel of reso-

lute alienation. Harry Beckwith had hardly said more, though he said it under the instigation of violent irritation, than he thought. That he loved Cecily Morgan with the impetuosity to which his nature was subject, he himself was perfectly aware ; but it is extremely questionable whether even he had ascertained in what manner that violent love was to be gratified. It has been stated that the younger Beckwith was not over-fastidious in his dealings with the fair sex. Handsome, agreeable, well-informed, and polished, he possessed, and he was quite aware that he possessed, no slight weight in female society : and it is, I am afraid, too true, that he was not always very scrupulous to what purposes he turned it. Yet Harry Beckwith was not an absolutely heartless libertine. More than once he had resisted the inclination to evil, when he saw, or fancied, that the mischiefs likely to arise would outweigh the gratification both to himself and others; and hence it is not to be supposed that he could deliberately and coolly determine upon the ruin of an innocent and confiding girl like Cecily Morgan. With all his faults, and they were both numerous and heavy,

Harry was not deficient in gratitude; and he could not fail to perceive, that if ever he owed a debt of the kind to any human being, he owed it to Mr. Morgan. Nevertheless, Harry was not wanting in prudence. It required no monitor like his cousin to remind him that the pay of a subaltern, slenderly assisted by such an allowance as a younger son could grant to his younger son, would not suffice to support a wife and family, as he should desire his to be supported; and hence, the idea of marriage had never been entertained by him except as something which it behoved him at all hazards to avoid. If, therefore, he had not resolved to seduce the maiden, to whom his own heart assured him that he was attached, as little had he made up his mind to address her in the language of honourable love; and hence, perhaps, not less than on account of the lurking suspicion which he entertained that Cecily was to Oliver an object of more than common interest, arose that excessive irritability, to which he gave way as often as his sentiments and wishes touching the girl became the subject of their conversation.

Whilst such thoughts as these passed rapidly,

but painfully, through his mind, and whilst he writhed under reproaches which cut the more deeply as he felt them to be just, the space which separated him from the object of his fondest wishes was rapidly diminishing; and a thousand well-known landmarks were passed carelessly by. Not once, however, did he pause to look back upon the man from whom he had parted both in anger and in sorrow. He even endeavoured to persuade himself that the return of Oliver to the lines was an event, of all others, the most desirable; and that he was now relieved from a restraint, which, had it not been taken away, must have grievously interfered with all his personal enjoyments. But though he thus strove to reason himself into composure, his step and air were not those of a man at peace with himself; whilst his countenance, had an observer been by to scan it, would have presented an expression indicative of any thing rather than internal quiet. There was no smile on his lips, no laughing twitter in his eye,—no exclamation, the child of exuberant happiness, burst from him; but doggedly, and unequally, he walked on, more like a man labouring under the

agony of a parting, than one about to meet the woman to whom his fondest vows were plighted.

He had by this time traversed the long and interesting sweep of road, which separates Kingsbridge from the entrance of the valley, at the upper extremity of which the house of Belmont stands. Instinctively, he took a direction to the right; and moody, absent, and unobserving as before, began to ascend. Yet never had he penetrated that lovely glen, on a day, or at a season, when, to the eye of even an ordinary spectator, it would have presented greater attractions. It was the end of September, and the maturing influences of autumn, though but slightly acknowledged, were just beginning to exhibit symptoms of their power, both among the woods and over the meadows. The foliage in the former, though neither scanty nor sere, had assumed a deep, in some places almost a purple hue,—the prelude to that darker tinge which soon degenerates into yellow; whilst the prairie grass waved rankly and heavily upon the latter, giving proof that its freshness was gone, and that what remained, however pleasing to the eye, was totally devoid of nutriment. The

woods were, however, still leafy and green, as the meadows were still smiling and luxuriant; and the stream brawled along its well-known course, clear as at the opening of spring, and shallow as when summer is at its height. All these objects, lying, as they then did, under a sky perfectly cloudless, and lighted by the rays of a brilliant noon-day's sun, combined to make up a landscape upon which no person, however indifferent to such objects, could possibly look with indifference; yet were they gazed at with a vacant stare by one more than ordinarily sensitive of the charms of visible nature, simply because the gazer was too much ingrossed by painful and tumultuous passions, to permit his mind to receive its accustomed impressions from the sense of sight.

There was, however, a sense to which, when affected by its proper object, even the mind of Harry Beckwith responded; it was the sense of hearing. He was pressing on with eyes rivetted to the ground, or, if lifted at all, lifted in utter unconsciousness, when a sound, which to him was ever sweeter than the sweetest music, suddenly caught his ear.

"Harry, dear Harry!" exclaimed a voice, the tones of which were not to be mistaken, "why is it that you will not look up? You have wounded my vanity sadly, I assure you, by compelling me thus to make my presence known."

Beckwith started like one suddenly awakened from sleep. He did look up,—and upon the brow of a little eminence close by, he beheld the being on whom his eye never rested except in a species of idolatry. She waved her hand to him, partly, as it seemed, in sign of recognition, partly in affected anger. In an instant all his cares and troubles were forgotten. What to him were grievances past, or prospects gloomy or sad for the future? The present overwhelmed them all. In it, and for it, he lived; and all but itself became things over which the waters of oblivion had swept. A brief moment served to carry him to her side, and in the next she was folded to his bosom.

"Blessings be upon thee, dearest girl!" exclaimed he: "this is indeed a happiness which I had not anticipated: and never, no, never, was even your presence so acceptable to me as

it is now. Oh! Cecily, if you knew but the misery which I have suffered, and was suffering at the moment when your sweet voice reached me, you would both pity your unfortunate Harry, and thank Providence that it made you the instrument of delivering him from a thraldom so horrible. But no matter; that is past, and whilst I am with you, where is the misfortune under which I can bend?"

Cecily would have rallied her lover, had her own spirits permitted; but when she examined his countenance more narrowly, and observed there traces of feelings too deeply engraved even for her presence at once to dispel, her gaiety forsook her, and she became seriously alarmed. "For heaven's sake, Harry," exclaimed she, disengaging herself from his embrace as she spoke, "what has befallen you? Why is it that you look so wild? Are you ill, dearest? or has some calamity or misfortune overtaken you?—or, oh, God! my prophetic heart tells me that it must be so—is your regiment ordered elsewhere, and are we doomed to part? Speak, speak, Harry! tell me the worst at once,—I will bear it, indeed I will, like a woman, and like

a Christian!—but if you value my peace, keep me not a moment in suspense."

"Nay, dearest Cecily," replied he, "moderate those fears; not one of all the evils which you have enumerated has occurred. How foolish in me thus needlessly to alarm you; and that too, because, forsooth, I am myself ill at ease, about a matter which perhaps ought not to create uneasiness at all. I am in perfect health, my affairs are exactly as they were when last we met, and not a whisper has been circulated as to any change of quarters,—there is no immediate prospect at least of our parting. Yet am I unhappy for all that, Cecily; and even you, great as is your influence over me, will not, I fear, be able to make me otherwise."

"Unhappy, Harry!" cried she, in a tone which partook in part of gaiety, in part of reproach,—"unhappy, and not communicate the cause to me! Is this fair? is this treatment such as I merit at your hands? Am I less capable of bearing your sorrows than of partaking in your joys? or do you hesitate to intrust me with any secret, who have kept no secret from you?

Nay, Harry, you will not behave thus to a silly girl, who has, perhaps, too frankly told you that she lives but for you, and would gladly, gladly die, to secure your welfare."

"Beautiful and artless creature," cried he, "believe me there is no matter worthy to be repeated, which I ever have kept, or ever will keep concealed from you. At present I am silent, simply because I scarcely know what cause to assign for my depression of spirits. It is true that Oliver and I have had some words; we parted in anger, and that too about you; but we have often done so before, and without doubt we shall soon become reconciled again. Yet does it vex me to be at variance even for a time with the friend of my early youth, however justifiable the ground of quarrel on my part, and however unreasonable his behaviour."

"About me, said you?" replied she. "Then your cousin is opposed to our union; and not your cousin only, but all your relatives in England. Oh, Harry, I have all along suspected as much. I have all along feared that those great and titled connexions of yours would

not receive as a member of their family, a poor untaught child of the wilderness like myself. If it be so, Harry, do not hesitate to cast me off. My heart will break, it is true, to lose you; but it would break more speedily and more painfully were I to be the cause to you of one moment's distress: therefore go, most beloved one, return to them, and leave me to perish in my loneliness."

Cecily spoke not without emotion, yet without shedding tears. She turned her bright blue eyes full upon the countenance of her lover, who was gazing at her with an expression of admiration and respect, such as presented no inapt picture of his feelings. Her glance, though timid and bashful as it always was, told no tale of wavering or indecision. But it is not in woman's nature to resist for any length of time the inroads of violent sorrow; and her calmness gradually but surely faded away. Then the tears came, not in floods, but slowly and one by one, gathering in her large blue eyes like rain-drops, and rolling over the cheek without so much as a pressure of the lids. Harry Beckwith was deeply and sincerely af-

fected. Whatever his designs might have previously been, all his thoughts became on the instant purified and hallowed. Once more he pressed her to his heart, and assuring her, that in giving admission to such ideas, she made needless shipwreck of her own happiness, he proceeded, as well as he could, to give a general outline of his late conference with his cousin. Of course he made in this no mention whatever of Oliver's suspicions, nor of the grounds which he had himself given for their formation. On the contrary, he represented their difference as having arisen entirely from an attempt, on the part of Oliver, to dissuade him from continuing his visits to Belmont; and he more than insinuated that the attempt was made under the expectation that, were he removed, Oliver might himself find favour in Cecily's eyes.

"But you see, Cecily," continued he in a gayer tone, "that, however tender my regard for him, I am not quite so disinterested as to resign in his favour my claims upon you; therefore I refused to be guided by his sage, but selfish counsels, and so we parted angrily."

Cecily was silent for a few moments, during which her expressive countenance exhibited signs of some strong and painful feeling at work within; but the cloud gradually departed from her brow, and she answered calmly: "You surprise me by your communication, Harry. Oliver's manner has ever been to me kind and attentive; but it has been the kindness of friendship merely, not of love. We have conversed familiarly together about you, likewise; and on no occasion has he spoken of you otherwise than in terms of the warmest commendation. Surely you mistake his object; he cannot seriously mean to become the suitor of one, whom he knows to be entirely and absolutely devoted to his friend."

Harry blushed as this severe but unintentional rebuke escaped her; and he was not sufficiently an adept in the art of deceiving, to conceal his blushes. He answered hurriedly and confusedly, that possibly he might have misunderstood his cousin; but that, if he did, the mistake arose entirely from the depth of his affection, which could not endure that any rival should presume to interfere with its intentions.

He then hastily changed the subject, and began to make inquiries as to the health of her father and brother. To these she of course replied, as such replies are usually given; and then putting her arm through his, they walked on towards the house. But they were neither of them at ease. She continued, in spite of his assurances to the contrary, to suspect that some more serious cause for her lover's acknowledged discontent had arisen, than a passing dispute with his cousin; whilst he writhed under the humiliating conviction that he had acted with two-fold duplicity; first, in his general dealings both towards her and his relative, and now, in the paltry attempt which he had made, to give a colouring to that relative's motives from which his own heart assured him that they were free.

A few moments' walk brought them to their point of destination, where the visitor was cordially welcomed by Mr. Morgan and his son; and Harry Beckwith soon found himself once more seated in a snug parlour, beside the hospitable board of his preserver. The habitation of which he was now an inmate, like the greater

proportion of American villas of those days, was constructed entirely of wood; and stood, in the cottage style, only one story, exclusive of attics, from the ground. It was a long pile, with white painted walls, green doors, a veranda in front, and a thatched roof; and the windows, in strict keeping with the general character of the building, were all of them leaded lattices. The grounds immediately about it had at one period been laid out with a strict attention to the taste of the times; and even now the parterres in which flowers had been reared, and the sloping banks and terraces, remained; but such was the unsettled state of the country, and so insecure the tenure by which property was held, that no man dreamed, as long as the war raged at his door, of paying the slightest attention to matters not of the first importance. Gardens, pleasure-grounds, lawns, and parks, were accordingly permitted, throughout the whole compass of the Neutral Ground, to run to waste; and even the fields, so harassing were the inroads of the foragers from both camps, were in many districts left untilled. This, together with the dilapidation of fences,

the destruction of barns, sheds, and in some places of dwellings themselves, gave to the district an air of extreme desolation; and though the vale of Belmont lay considerably out of the common track, it had not entirely escaped the general contamination. The consequence was, that whatever of beauty surrounded Belmont (and of beauty there was no trifling share) arose entirely from the bounty of Nature,—art having long ago ceased to exert its energies in a spot where their results were continually effaced. But within doors the case was different. There every thing bespoke the residence of a man accustomed in early life to the best society, and endowed with a taste for those pursuits which a polished mind can alone enjoy. The rooms, though not large, were all amply and elegantly furnished; several specimens of the best Dutch and Italian masters adorned the walls; and bookcases stored with the works of the most distinguished authors, held their place, not only in the library, but in the drawing-room. Nor was it in such matters only that Belmont could boast of abundant sources of gratification. Whatever has been told of Ame-

rican neatness and comfort here had a home, even to the plenishing of the kitchen, and the viands sent forth from that most important of all domestic establishments.

The truth is, that Mr. Morgan was not only what is usually called, a man of substance, but a gentleman, by birth, circumstances, and taste. The only son of a rich merchant, he had enjoyed every advantage which an English education could bestow; and having, like most young Americans of his rank, made the tour of the European continent, he had borne a commission in his Majesty's service. Though it was not his fortune to see any real service before an enemy, still the society to which his military rank proved a passport, was not without its effect in polishing his manners and enlarging his ideas, at the same time that the habits of a military life gave tone to a character naturally inclined to timidity. But Mr. Morgan continued in the army no longer than during the lifetime of his father, at whose decease he settled at New York. Here he formed an attachment to a very amiable woman, with whom in due time he became united; and here, till the commence-

ment of the troubles under which his country now groaned, he dwelt—for a while in affluence and domestic comfort; afterwards, as men usually dwell, whose brightest hopes in life are blighted.

Mr. Morgan was one of that numerous class of Americans, who from the first determined to take no active part in the struggle between Great Britain and her Colonies. In principle, perhaps, he deserved to be ranked rather as a Whig than as a Tory; but, having once borne the King's commission, and having received great personal kindness from several of the King's ministers, he considered himself as bound in honour not to take up arms against his old master. Whether he acted wisely or well in so doing, it is not my province to decide; but affairs no sooner came to a crisis, than he made up his mind to withdraw from a place, where he saw that it would be impossible for him to remain without being dragged into a deviation from his plans. In accordance with this plan, the declaration of adherence to the national cause on the part of the leading men in the city, was to him a signal of removal; and, as he had resigned long ago,

on account of domestic circumstances, an office which he held under the King's Government, he now withdrew, with his children and domestics, to Belmont, where he had remained ever since. Though repeatedly invited by the leaders on both sides to lend the weight of his name and influence to the cause in which they were engaged, he steadily persevered in maintaining a strict neutrality—a line of conduct which, from certain peculiarities in his temperament, and a knowledge of the causes which produced it, he was permitted to pursue without molestation.

I have said that Mr. Morgan, soon after his return to New York, formed an alliance with an exceedingly beautiful and interesting woman. To his wife he was attached in a degree not frequently witnessed, nor even dreamed of, except in the world of romance. She had but to form and express a wish, and if its gratification lay within the reach of his utmost exertions, it never failed to be gratified. He lived for her, and for her only; she was the object of his almost idolatrous adoration; even the daughter with whom she presented him within a year after their marriage, was to him as nothing, so

completely were his thoughts ingrossed by devotion for his wife. During three years he enjoyed the society of that amiable woman, who, if a temper the mildest and the sweetest, joined to a person of surpassing beauty, merit the continued love of a husband, fully merited his; but at the end of that period a calamity befell, which struck at once at the root of all his happiness. His wife died in bringing into the world a son, and Mr. Morgan became from that hour in all respects an altered man.

For some time after the decease of his wife, Mr. Morgan laboured under a decided aberration of intellect. He was not, indeed, at any moment furious, nor dangerous either to himself or others; but he became totally incapable of all exertion, and quite inadequate to the transaction of the most ordinary business. From society, of which he had formerly been one of the brightest ornaments, he entirely withdrew; he gave up all occupation, resigning his office under Government, and causing his private concerns to be disposed of at a serious loss; then guarding himself from the approach even of his most intimate friends, he existed altogether on

the memory of a happiness which had been a great deal too perfect to last. He ate, slept, and lived continually in the apartment which had been his wife's. He permitted no rude hand to derange the furniture of that chamber from the order in which she had placed it; and even his children, though led occasionally by the nurse into his presence, failed in rekindling those sentiments, which seemed to have utterly expired in her coffin. But the keenest sorrow will yield to time; and Mr. Morgan, after indulging for a space in this mode of existence, began gradually to attain to a more healthy tone of mind. It was now that his children became indeed to him sources of consolation the holiest and most pure; and in bestowing upon them his undivided care and attention, he found the void occasioned in his heart partially filled up. With his former friends and neighbours, however, he never resumed his intimacy. He lived the life of a recluse for several years in the heart of one of the gayest and most hospitable towns in America, an object of sincere commiseration and involuntary respect to all classes of its inhabitants. It is hardly necessary to

add, that to their knowledge of his private sufferings, Mr. Morgan was indebted for the readiness with which both Whigs and Tories connived at his adoption of a neutral principle; and that he was permitted to remain, as he had done during the first six years, unmolested, except by an occasional visit from marauders at Belmont.

In this retired spot Mr. Morgan devoted a large portion of his time to the education of his son and daughter. In the latter, as she grew up to womanhood, he beheld not merely the personal loveliness, but the pliability, gentleness and extreme affection, which had distinguished her mother: and he became in consequence attached to her by a tie stronger than usually binds even a father to his child. There was no accomplishment of which he was himself master, which he failed to bestow upon her. Under his guidance she became well acquainted with the best English, French, and Italian authors; she painted, sang, and played the guitar, with exquisite taste and perfect simplicity; and her mind was richly stored with a knowledge of history, as well ancient and modern. There are, how-

ever, nicer tints in the colouring of the female mind, which no hand but that of a female can bestow; and in these Cecily Morgan was unavoidably deficient. Clever she was, intelligent, and amiable, and upright; she was affectionate likewise, warm-hearted, and sincere; yet was there wanting a something, which it would not be very easy to describe; though of the something to which I allude, every one who has had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with a girl brought up as Cecily had been, will at once be aware. It could not be said with any truth, that she was forward; for a creature more essentially modest, lived not; but she had no idea that there was a necessity for concealing her thoughts upon any subject, and hence she never failed, as often as circumstances invited, to speak her mind. From this cause without doubt, a cause which owed its existence entirely to the absence of a mother's superintending care, Cecily's heart soon became the property of the handsome stranger; and her manner told the tale long before he had addressed her in other terms than those of ordinary acquaintanceship. Yet was there nothing in her manner either to-

wards him or any one besides, at all in contradiction to the strictest laws of feminine propriety. Open she was, and candid; perhaps profuse in the use of terms which expressed no more than she really felt: but from the most remote approximation to licentiousness she would have shrunk with the intuitive horror of a woman who has never been contaminated by an intermixture with crowded, and, as a necessary consequence, impure society.

With respect, again, to Davis her brother, he was what most lads are likely to become who live much alone, and have been from their boyhood free from the trammels of custom. Like his sister, he was warm-hearted, open, and frank; and having, like her, studied under an able tutor, he was well versed in every kind of lore, except a knowledge of mankind. In person, too, he resembled Cecily greatly, only that his make was more robust, and his stature more commanding; whilst in temperament he differed entirely from what his father had been at his age; inasmuch as he was bold, resolute, and fearless. What the faults of his character were it is hard to say, because he lived under a mo-

dification of civilized life, which furnished little or no opportunity for their developement; but selfishness, cowardice, deceit, and cruelty, were certainly not of the number; and the lad who at sixteen years of age, is free from all these, need not blush to hold up his head in any company.

Such was the group of persons among whom Harry Beckwith now found himself seated at a board amply spread with every thing which a well-stocked farm and an indifferently supplied cellar could furnish.

CHAPTER V.

THE welcome which Harry Beckwith received from every member of this secluded family, was such as usually awaits the solitary friend who is permitted from time to time to break in upon a privacy, to all but himself, strictly impenetrable. Mr. Morgan cleared away the few remaining clouds which still hung upon his brow, as he grasped the hand of the youth to whom he had already rendered services so important; and Davis hailed his arrival with that boisterous satisfaction, which, whilst it proved the boy himself to be the mere pupil of Nature, demonstrated that Nature had endowed him with kind feelings and a warm heart. Even the servants, who in almost all cases take the tone from their superiors, ushered him in

with smiling countenances and obsequious bows; and however valueless these smiles and bows may be in themselves, we all know that they are not without their effect in assuring a visitor, that his presence in the mansion where they are displayed is acceptable.

It would have been contrary to nature, had not the uneasy feelings under which both Harry and Cecily laboured, melted before the sunshine of so many happy faces. The young couple had not joined their friends many minutes, when their wonted gaiety and good-humour returned; and seldom has a merrier or more lively party surrounded a table, than that which sat down to the discussion of the excellent fare which Mr. Morgan's housekeeper provided. Some questions were indeed put, relative to the cause of Oliver's absence, which, because they manifestly gave uneasiness to Harry Beckwith, distressed Cecily Morgan likewise; but the pain arising from such was of very short duration, and then all things again returned into a channel of pure and innocent enjoyment. Thus passed the meal, and thus too passed the period after the meal, during which the established rules

of society permitted Cecily to be a partaker in the gentlemen's conviviality. But the door had no sooner closed upon her sylph-like figure, than Mr. Morgan, after requesting Davis to leave them, drew his chair closer to young Beckwith, and in a tone at once affectionate and serious thus addressed him:

"I presume, Mr. Beckwith, that you will not be surprised when I inform you, that for some time back I have observed between you and my daughter a degree of intimacy, respecting the object and design of which I consider myself bound by my duty as a parent to make some inquiry. It is not that I entertain the slightest suspicion of you, my young friend,—far less that I distrust Cecily; but I know the materials of which human nature is composed too well, not to be aware, that an acquaintance such as yours must either cease at once, or ripen into a tie more tender. Now, though Cecily is to me the very apple of an eye; though, deprived of her society, there is nothing in this world capable of conferring upon me one moment's enjoyment, still my affection for her is at once too great and too disinterested to permit my harbouring

a wish opposed to what shall appear to be her interests: and if you really love her, as I am disposed to believe that you do, in God's name take her. My fortune, though not what it was, is still considerable; and if you are willing to become the protector of my child, it shall be freely shared with you. There is, however, one condition on which I must insist; it is, that you abandon the British service, and settle where I may occasionally behold the single human being, in whose presence I feel myself not utterly alone."

Young Beckwith was, to use the language of sailors, completely taken aback by this appeal. As Mr. Morgan had hitherto, neither by word nor in manner, evinced the smallest suspicion of the true cause which led him so frequently to Belmont, Beckwith had accustomed himself to believe, that in matters of the heart the old man possessed no penetration; and hence that he might without any danger of interruption carry on his intrigue just as long as might suit his own views, and drop it entirely whenever those views were accomplished. The delusion thus dispelled as abruptly as unexpectedly, left

him sadly at a loss how to act under circumstances on the occurrence of which he had never calculated. He was silent for some moments; and his embarrassment was such as could not escape the notice of his host. "Surely," said the latter, in a tone partaking slightly of sternness, "I have not fallen into error here. I have not, I trust, been making a tender of Cecily's hand to one who knows not the value of the gift offered."

"No, Sir," answered Harry hurriedly; "of Miss Morgan's excellent qualities and extreme beauty, I am, and have long been fully sensible; indeed you do no more than justice to the nature of my sentiments, when you suppose that I have viewed her, from the first, with the fondest and warmest partiality. But your offer, generous and noble as it is, has come upon me with so little previous warning, that you will, I am sure, pardon me when I confess, that it has utterly confounded me."

"Well, well," replied Mr. Morgan, smiling, "take time to recover from your confusion. Consider the matter deliberately, and give me

your answer, either now or on some future occasion, as may best suit you."

"Had I but my own wishes to consult," answered Harry eagerly, "Heaven knows that not a moment would be required for deliberation on such a subject; but there are others interested in this matter, to whose opinion I am bound to pay some respect. My father lives, and though neither his only nor his eldest son, he will of course expect to be consulted in an affair so important. Then, again, there is your annexed condition:—how can I with honour, —how can I without absolute and eternal disgrace, accede to that at a juncture like the present?"

"I made no mention of any particular day or hour, Mr. Beckwith," replied his host drily; "nor am I so very anxious to rid myself of the presence of Cecily, as to force her upon any man against his will. We had better change the subject."

"Nay, nay, my dear Sir!" exclaimed Harry, seriously alarmed at the turn which matters seemed about to take, "if you imagine that

my not closing instantly with your proposal, and abandoning every thing—country, friends, profession, and fame itself, for her sake, arises from any feeling of indifference towards your daughter, you do me wrong. Heaven is my witness——"

At this moment the door of the parlour burst open, and a negro slave, with terror strongly depicted in his countenance, rushed in. "Fly, Massa, fly, hide!" exclaimed the terrified creature; "here come de Skinners afoot and a horseback, right up de valley, and yonder be de Riglers on both sides all round de house. For God's sake hide, Massa, English captain, or he hang like a dog."

Mr. Morgan and Harry sprang to the window, and there, sure enough, a spectacle met them, which caused the blood of both to stagnate. A squadron of some twenty or thirty irregular horsemen, followed by a company of ill-dressed militia, was advancing rapidly up the glen, the former being already within two hundred yards of the paddock-gate. The hills on either hand were covered with troops, some resting idly on the summits, others

in straggling detachments winding along their faces, whilst all appeared to observe with marked scrutiny the movements of the party which directed their steps towards Belmont. It required no farther evidence to assure both Harry and his host that the house was surrounded; escape, therefore, by flight was entirely cut off, should such a measure be required; but as this was not the first occasion on which Belmont was visited in a threatening manner, though the design of those who threatened extended no farther than to collect forage, Mr. Morgan was willing to believe that no personal damage would accrue either to himself or his guest. In this, however, he had been deceived, as the occurrences of the next minute demonstrated.

Mr. Morgan had just time to express himself to this effect, when his son and daughter, breathless with agitation, rushed into the room. "We are betrayed!" exclaimed the former fiercely. "You have been traced, Beckwith, and they are come to arrest you: all chance of flight is taken away; every approach to the house is watched; and an officer's guard is already at the door. What is to be done?"

"Nothing!" replied Harry coolly, "there is nothing to be done, except to submit quietly to a misfortune which we cannot avert. I had rather they had taken me, if I must be taken, in the field; but here, as there, I can be treated only as a prisoner of war."

"No, no," exclaimed Cecily, throwing herself franticly into his arms, "they will not treat you as a prisoner of war. It is as a spy they seek you; if you fall into their hands, your death is certain."

"Impossible, Cecily!" replied Beckwith, though he was far from feeling the assurance which he wished to convey to her: "I am here upon the Neutral Ground; beyond our own pickets, it is true, but not within the circle of theirs; they cannot, without a gross and glaring violation of the laws of war, condemn me."

"And my father! my father too, his life is sacrificed!" shrieked the agonized girl.

At this moment, the voices of men, and the heavy tramp of feet, were heard in the passage.

"We will make one effort to save you, yet," exclaimed Mr. Morgan, moving at the same

time towards the head of the room. There was suspended there a large painting, a copy from one of the Cartoons, which reached to within a few feet of the floor. This Mr. Morgan thrust aside, and a small door was displayed, which being pushed back, gave access to a sort of recess or dark closet. "There, Harry, take shelter there," exclaimed he; "and remember that whatever conversation you may chance to overhear, you must on no account show yourself. If you are found under this roof, both you and I shall suffer; should they not succeed in forcing you from your hiding-place, one of us certainly, perhaps both, may escape."

There was no time for expostulation or reply; for the young man had scarcely taken his station, and the picture was barely replaced as it had been before, when four troopers, headed by an officer, burst into the parlour.

"A good day to you, Mr. Morgan!" said the officer, a tall, robust, cross-made man, with huge black whiskers, and a particularly forbidding expression of countenance. "These are pleasant times for a man to enjoy the quiet of

his own family: doubtless, you lead but a secluded life here, and have no objection occasionally to entertain an old acquaintance."

"It will give me much pleasure to entertain the gentleman who now addresses me," replied Mr. Morgan firmly, "though I cannot recollect that I ever had the honour of seeing him before—or any other officer in the American service."

"And in King George's service too, I suppose," said the intruder. "You Neutrals are not very particular, as every body knows, whom you honour with your friendship. I am extremely anxious to become acquainted with one of them there red-coats: may I beg the favour of you to produce him?"

"I do not understand you, Sir," replied Mr. Morgan. "There are no red-coats here, as far, at least, as I am aware."

"Oh, no doubt, no doubt. You are not aware that a young gentleman came this morning from the post of Kingsbridge, with a fowling-piece on his shoulder and a couple of dogs; —whew, whew; there they go,—and very pretty setters they are, I assure you. They seem to

expect their master hereabouts too; for, see, they are smelling under the very window."

Mr. Morgan looked out, and beheld Harry's dogs running at large upon the lawn. The circumstance was abundantly mortifying; and the more so, as one of them carried round his neck a collar, on which the name, rank, and regiment of his master were engraved; yet, hoping that his case was not absolutely desperate, he determined still to deny strictly all knowledge of them and of their owner. He did so, but it was to no purpose.

"You know nothing about them!" said the officer with imperturbable gravity; "of course, they made their way into your stable by pure accident, and quite accidentally tied themselves to the manger. I dare say now, their master's visit was just as accidental as their's."

"Well, Sir," said Mr. Morgan, conscious that farther evasion would avail nothing, "what matters it though an English officer should have been here? You are aware, I presume, that this is Neutral Ground, and that we are liable to interruptions, not from our friends only, but from enemies."

"Very true," replied the trooper; "friends and enemies are equally entitled to traverse the Neutral Ground; but to whom am I to consider that you allude under that title? and where is this Neutral Ground of which you speak? You don't mean to call the British, enemies; because, you know, you have seen nothing of any British to-day;—and we, I presume, are hardly accounted friends."

"Sir!" said Mr. Morgan firmly, "this is sheer trifling. I confess to you that an English officer has been here to-day. He ventured so far abroad in search of game, and made a demand upon me for hospitality, which I could not refuse; but where he is now, you must discover for yourselves. The instant an alarm was given of your approach he fled, and I have not seen him since."

"Now, this is what I call coming near to the mark," replied the officer, pouring out a glass of wine, and drinking it. "I guess we shall go on step by step till we reach the whole truth at last. Do you take me for so perfect a simpleton," continued he, looking fiercely, "as to suppose that I believe one word of that fine cock

and bull story? Why, man, a mouse could not have escaped us. We have been round your premises these two hours, and though I saw with my own eyes the young gentleman enter, neither mine nor any body's besides saw him sally forth again. Poh, poh, I know that he is in the house somewhere; so you had better at once produce him."

"If you know that he is in the house," replied Mr. Morgan, "your shortest plan will be to search till you find him."

"No, by all that is damnable," exclaimed the trooper; "I know a better and shorter method than that. Look ye here, friend. Your true character is known at last. Under a pretence of ill-health, or ill-humour, or a point of honour forsooth, or some such miserable subterfuge, you have been acting the traitor to your country, and receiving continual visits from British officers, whom you have sent back to New York loaded with all the intelligence which you could procure. Your life, therefore, is forfeited, and if I choose, I may hang you up, without farther inquiry, on the nearest tree on your own lawn. But this cursed spy we must catch; and I spare you, only that you may have the

shame and mortification of surrendering him into my power. So deliver him, or by heaven! you shall swing for it on the instant."

"You say rightly, Sir," replied Mr. Morgan calmly, "that my life is in your hands. You may do with it what you will, but you cannot compel me to act contrary to the dictates of honour and conscience."

"We shall see," said the trooper fiercely. Soldiers, seize that old scoundrel, and bind his hands behind his back; and hark ye, cause a large fire to be lighted on the green sward; we shall try whether a little roasting may not bring the traitor to his senses."

The soldiers advanced to obey these orders; but Cecily and Davis rushed in between, and the former on her knees, the latter with hands clasped violently together, besought them to desist. "Spare, spare my father," they both exclaimed in a breath.

"You would not do as you threaten," cried Davis, turning to the officer: "the uniform which you wear is that of a soldier; you could not disgrace it by acting the part of a Skinner."

"A Skinner, boy!" cried the ruffian, with a

savage laugh. "Why, what the devil am I but a Skinner, and what are these but Skinners? Did you take us for Riglars? poor mercenary slaves, whose liberty is sold for a daily pittance? I know better than that; and now that you know it too, do you think that I won't keep my promise? Get the fire lighted one of you," continued he, turning to his followers, "and the rest do as I command."

"Wretch, then you shall do more than keep your promise," exclaimed the youth, grasping a knife that lay on the table, and springing towards the officer. But the latter was too much accustomed to such acts of desperation, not to be continually on his guard against them; he leaped aside, and with a blow of his fist stretched the stripling on the ground. The soldiers now closed in, and fatal consequences might have followed, had not the attention of the combatants been suddenly attracted by a violent shaking of the picture at the upper end of the room. No time was granted for the utterance of conjecture as to its cause, ere the picture itself was pushed aside, and Harry Beckwith, his eye flashing with fury, stood before them.

"Monsters, ruffians! assassins!" cried he, "what do you meditate? Would you murder an innocent man in cold blood? Let that gentleman go, and make me your prisoner—I am the person whom you seek; but remember also that I am a British officer, and as such, that I insist upon being carried immediately before your General, who will deal with me as justice requires."

The effect of Beckwith's sudden appearance among them was, with all parties present, as if a thunderbolt had burst over their heads. Cecily screamed aloud; and before Harry, who sprang forward, could reach her, she fell senseless upon the carpet. Mr. Morgan could only exclaim, "Oh, Beckwith, you have ruined all!" whilst Davis, shaking himself free from the nerveless grasp of the Skinners, darted through the open door, and disappeared. As to the American officer, though at first not less astonished than the rest, he very soon recovered his composure, and rubbing his hands one within the other, exclaimed, "Bravo! young gentleman; this is a pretty piece of work as ever one would wish to witness. I guessed our farce would end in a serious play; and so it has.

Come along, my master,—you have saved your friend here from a little broiling; but hanged you shall both be, before another sun sets, or my name is not Jonathan Dobson. What ho there! serjeant of the guard, seize your prisoner!"

His summons was answered by the advance of an additional party from the lawn, who, running forward, leaped through the open window into the apartment. They turned upon Beckwith, who was supporting the lifeless form of Cecily in his arms, and without the smallest compunction for his evident sufferings, or the pitiable state of the girl, grasped him tightly by the arms. "Hands off, scoundrels," exclaimed he; "I have told you that I do not mean to offer any resistance; but, if you attempt to drag me away from that lady in her present condition, by Him that made me, you shall find that you had better attack the lioness nursing her cubs!" As he spoke, he shook the men aside like children; then, gently raising Cecily from the floor, he bore her to a couch, on which he laid her. "Now then, gentlemen," continued he, "only permit me to see this lady's senses restored, and

I will follow wherever you choose to lead." But his endeavours to soften such miscreants as those who surrounded him, availed nothing. Uttering dreadful oaths, they again seized him, threw him upon his back, in spite of a desperate resistance, and passing a cord round his arms, bound his hands so tightly behind him, that the very blood seemed ready to burst from the fingers' ends. The same treatment was bestowed upon Mr. Morgan; and then, and not till then, their leader thought of paying attention to Cecily. But his notice of her amounted to nothing more than a summons to such of the domestics as were within call, and an order to convey her to her chamber; with strict injunctions that both she and they should be kept prisoners, till directions were given to the contrary.

In the mean while Davis, who had so promptly turned to account the general stupefaction occasioned by Beckwith's appearance, was sorely put to it, how to elude the pursuit which he apprehended would be made after him. To attempt a passage through the cordon of troops which surrounded the house, would, he was well aware, be useless; and where to conceal himself

within doors from the scrutiny of the Skinner and his gang, he knew not. In this dilemma he took refuge in the case of a huge eight-day clock, which stood in the hall, where for a long while he remained undisturbed, or rather undetected. But that period was to him one of the most intensely and painfully interesting that he had ever spent. Not that any thing occurred calculated to alarm him for his own personal safety,—to say the truth, little or no inquiry was made after him either by friends or foes,—but he became an ear-witness to a scene more harrowing to his feelings than any which could have well passed before him.

CHAPTER VI.

FEW epochs in the annals of American revolutionary warfare were more memorable than the 19th of September 1781. On the morning of that day Washington, who had previously caused great and ostentatious preparations to be made, pushed forward a crowd of irregular troops on the road to Kingsbridge, distributing at the same time his column of Continentals so as to induce a persuasion that he intended seriously to assault the British lines in that quarter. With this view he descended in force from his position in the Highlands, overspread for an hour or two the White Plains, and then suddenly countermarching, passed the mass of his army over the Hudson's by Kingsferry, and commenced his skilful and well-conducted

march towards York Town. It was on this remarkable day, that the two Beckwiths sallied forth upon their sporting excursion from the lines. The elder by returning, as has been described, to the place from which he set out, became one of a multitude whom Washington's admirable combinations deceived into an expectation that the hostile armies were about to set the issue of the war upon a single battle; whilst the younger, by obeying the impulse of personal inclination, found himself a prisoner in the hands of that force, which the American General left behind him. How Harry Beckwith happened to escape capture in his progress towards Belmont, it were a hard matter to say. He could not have turned off from the main road into the valley many seconds ere the head of Washington's advanced guard reached that point; but he gained the mansion unobserved, as has been already narrated, and there he might have continued till after the scouts had withdrawn, but for the treachery of one of Mr. Morgan's domestics. That caitiff, a slave whom his master too much favoured, had long meditated the act

of villainy which he this day perpetrated. I need not say, that in those times considerable rewards were given on both sides to such persons as either made or pretended to make disclosures of treasonable practices. Of spies, and the mischiefs which they were capable of producing, British as well as Americans then entertained an apprehension absolutely childish; and hence no story could be told, however ridiculous in itself, having a spy, or an act of treason for its subject, which was not treated, both by Americans and British, with the gravest attention. Mr. Morgan's faithless slave was not ignorant of that fact. He gladly availed himself of it to make out an exceedingly plausible tale respecting the frequent visits of young Beckwith to Belmont; and the consequence was, the surrounding of Mr. Morgan's house by a portion of the force which was left, under the command of General Heath, to mask the march of Washington's main army towards the Carolinas.

Captain Jonathan Dobson, as the leader of the Skinners was called, had no sooner secured his prisoners, than he despatched a messenger

to inform General Heath of the event. The announcement was received with as much satisfaction as if the fate of empires depended upon it; and a court-martial was commanded instantly to assemble, for the purpose of awarding to the captives the destiny which they should appear to merit. In ordinary cases the utmost caution is used in selecting the members of a tribunal upon whose fiat depends the life or death of a fellow creature; and possibly the Americans were not on other occasions less fastidious than their neighbours;—but never was fitness for the office more undisguisedly disregarded than was done that day, in choosing the persons appointed to try Harry Beckwith and his host. The Court consisted of two Captains of irregular bands, Captain Jonathan Dobson being of the number; as many subalterns of Militia; with a field officer attached to the staff of General Heath, as President. Of these, all, the staff officer not excepted, were persons of mean birth, limited education, strong party feelings, and violent tempers. The two captains were indeed men of lawless and reckless habits, who carried arms not from

any love of country or principle, real or imagined; but purely because of the licence which a state of warfare affords, for the indulgence of the worst passions which degrade human nature: in whose eyes murder aud rapine were matters of mere business, and a man's life of no more value than the life of a dog. Nor, to say the truth, were the Militia Lieutenants in many respects better qualified than they to act the part of judges. If less sanguinary than the Skinners, they were unquestionably more timorous, as well as far more deeply imbued with personal and political antipathies; and hence men filling the situation which Mr. Morgan and Harry Beckwith filled, ran to the full as many risks from their imbecility, as they incurred from the well-known cruelty of their coadjutors.

The place chosen for the important drama about to be acted, was the hall, a large oblong room, in one corner of which stood the clock within the case of which Davis Morgan lay concealed. There was a sort of dais, or elevated platform at the upper end, on which a table was placed, the judges taking their seats round it with great formality; and the prisoners,

having their hands bound tightly behind them, were led forward by three dragoons, armed with drawn sabres. More, perhaps, for the sake of effect, than that any additional precautions were necessary, a platoon of soldiers, with loaded muskets and fixed bayonets, were drawn up at the other extremity; whilst in a remote corner stood the slave, to whose treachery the present scene was owing, and who was now about to consummate his crime by appearing as an evidence against his master. There was a silence of a few moments whilst these matters were adjusting, which enabled the prisoners to take an accurate survey of the countenances and air of the men before whom their defence was to be made. That survey was not very favourable to the indulgence of hope: but had such a feeling been indulged, the opening of the proceedings would have sufficed to destroy it; for it became manifest at once, from the mode of interrogation adopted, that the fate of the prisoners was sealed.

"You are, I believe," said the President, addressing himself to Beckwith, "an officer in the service of the British tyrant?"

"I have the honour to bear a commission," replied Harry, "in the army of his Britannic Majesty, to whom the epithet which you have just used does not apply."

"Well," continued the President with a sardonic smile, "we are not going to dispute about a word. Have the goodness to inform this Court, how you came to be taken at so great a distance from your lines, and in the disguise which you now wear."

"By all means," replied Beckwith. "In the first place, my present costume is no disguise: it is an ordinary shooting-dress, as your own senses may assure you; whilst the reason which caused me to assume it, is the very same which has guided me thus far beyond our outposts. I came abroad on an excursion of pleasure, under the persuasion that your army was, as it has long been, in position in the Highlands."

"I suppose, then, you would have us believe," said the President, "that your journey hither has been one of accident purely. Is this the first visit which you have paid to Belmont?"

"Certainly not," replied Beckwith; "I have

visited Belmont frequently before, though always on the same errand."

"Doubtless!" replied the President. "May I ask under what circumstances your acquaintance with your friend Mr. Morgan began?"

"Under the very same which have attended its continuance:—accidentally," replied Beckwith.

"You are not, then, indebted to Mr. Morgan for any thing beyond a few common civilities; you have never lain concealed under his roof, whilst American soldiers were in search of you."

"I do not deny that I attempted to conceal myself this morning, as I presume any other man would have done in my circumstances."

"Good," said the President, looking round with an expression of malicious delight upon his brother members; "so far you speak candidly. Now be kind enough to state whether this is the first time you have so concealed yourself, and why you should have experienced so very strong a reluctance to be taken."

"No soldier, I presume," replied Beckwith, purposely eluding the first interrogatory, "feels otherwise than reluctant to become,

under any circumstances, a prisoner of war; but the idea becomes doubly humiliating to him who sees himself liable to that fate through his own rashness."

"Then you had no fears for your neck?"

"For my neck!" exclaimed Harry with affected astonishment; "is it customary with the American troops to put their prisoners to death?"

"We always hang spies," observed the President drily. Then turning to Mr. Morgan, he began to put certain leading questions to him.

"You are, I think, one of those respectable members of society," said he, "who choose to take no part in the struggle between America and her oppressors."

"I have hitherto observed a strict neutrality," said Mr. Morgan, "for reasons, of which your chiefs are fully aware, and of which they have thought fit to approve."

"But this neutrality of yours does not hinder you from holding intercourse—familiar and confidential intercourse, with the agents of Sir Harry Clinton."

"I have held no intercourse with Sir Harry

Clinton's agents; I am ignorant of their persons; I do not know that such beings exist."

"How comes this British officer, then, to be found in your house, and under circumstances of no ordinary mystery? Why did you deny that he was here? why did you not produce him at once when demanded?"

"The officer himself has explained how he came," replied Mr. Morgan; "and as to my refusal to betray him, no man of honour will, I think, blame me for that. I would have as soon thought of giving up yourself, or any other American, to the British, had they come upon me as you have done, as I would have betrayed this young gentleman. He placed himself under the protection of my hospitality; and that bond even the savages respect."

"Your hospitality is of very extensive range," observed the President; "has it ever been exerted after the same fashion before?"

"I do not understand you," replied Mr. Morgan.

"It is false," said the officer; "you perfectly understand that I allude to the transactions of a certain morning last summer, when, but for

you, this young man must have fallen into our hands. Am I sufficiently explicit now?"

"Quite so," replied Mr. Morgan.

"I suppose we are not to expect from either of you," continued the officer, "a confession of the truth, and therefore the question which I am about to put will of course be put to no purpose. Have you ever held conversations together? I address myself now to both of you, or to either. Have you ever conversed on state affairs?—on matters involving the interests of the belligerent powers?—on the condition and strength of the hostile armies, and the positions of their several corps?"

The prisoners looked at one another, not in pretended, but in real surprise; they could not comprehend the object of the address, and they said so frankly, and plainly.

"I see how it is," said the President: "you will not answer because an answer must condemn you; but I have a witness here whose testimony goes as far with me as your own confession. Come forward, Pompey," exclaimed he, addressing himself to the negro, "and declare before

these gentlemen what you stated to General Heath and myself this morning."

The black obeyed, and in his broken English told a tedious tale of conferences mysteriously held between his master and the English Captain, of which, from his own account, he could overhear very little, and understood still less; but the purport of the whole was, to convey a persuasion, that Mr. Morgan was in the habit of communicating intelligence respecting the designs and movements of the American army. Pompey was not, indeed, very explicit in his account of the means by which such information was obtained; but he was sure that the names of Washington, Rochambeau, and other revolutionary leaders, were frequently mentioned, and that much was said on both sides touching West Point, King's Ferry, Peekskill, and other rebel posts. He recollected too, that he had on various occasions surprised the gentlemen poring over maps and plans, as he believed, of the Jersey Highlands, and that on all such occasions the Englishman seemed to receive instruction, whilst his master conveyed it. Such

was the substance of this man's evidence, to which the prisoners listened with a smile of unutterable contempt, whilst the judges themselves appeared by no means satisfied that proofs of treason more palpable were not produced. Nevertheless, the President who seemed bent upon their conviction, turned to the prisoners with an air of assumed triumph, and demanded what they had to say in answer to the slave's assertions."

"Say!" exclaimed Beckwith: "what should we say! That almost every syllable the miscreant has spoken is true, yet that not the faintest resemblance to a well-grounded charge of false-dealing between Mr. Morgan and myself has been made out. I freely admit that we have conversed repeatedly on all the topics to which your respectable witness deposes; but what is there in that to alarm the jealousy of either party?"

"But the map, the map, young man!" exclaimed the President exultingly: "with what design was that referred to? and how came you to be a listener when it lay before you?"

Beckwith paused for a moment, to consider

whether any such occurrence had ever taken place. At first his memory could discover no trace of it; nor was it till Mr. Morgan reminded him of a discussion which they had held touching the unfortunate expedition under General Burgoyne in 1777, that the fact recurred to him. Then, indeed, he explained the matter with so much candour and openness, that before any other judges his explanation must have been received as satisfactory. But the members of the present Court were not thus to be diverted from a persuasion which they had once adopted. One and all they shook their heads, in undisguised disbelief; and passing on to other matters, did their best to entrap both him and his host into contradictions. But why dwell longer upon a business, the result of which has, doubtless, been anticipated already? Let it suffice to state, that after a full hour wasted in such conversations as the preceding, the prisoners were ordered to withdraw; and the hall being cleared, this delectable Court proceeded to deliberate as to the nature of the sentence to be awarded.

It will readily be credited that Davis Morgan, who, in his place of concealment, had been an

attentive listener to the trial, held his very breath at this awful juncture, in order that not a syllable which fell from his father's judges might escape him. His feelings may therefore be imagined, when he heard the President address to his assistants a brief harangue, declaratory of his own conviction, that to permit either of the prisoners to escape, would be to betray their country, and to sacrifice their own character. "I have always had my suspicions of Morgan," continued he, "towards whom Congress has behaved with a very mistaken as well as mischievous lenity. Are not these suspicions amply confirmed? Can we believe that an English officer would thrust himself time after time into the dangers which beset him here, for no other purpose than to indulge a taste for shooting, or enjoy the society of a friend? Besides, what right has any American to make a friend of one who carries arms against his country? For that alone I aver that Morgan deserves death; and we cannot hang the one without the other. But it is for you, gentlemen, to decide; I can give no more than my own casting vote."

The President was not permitted to stand alone in this sanguinary determination. Each member of the Court, as his opinion was separately asked, pronounced both persons guilty, and sentence of death was in due form passed upon them.

"And now that we have discharged our duty," observed Captain Jonathan Dobson, "let us temper justice with mercy as far as the laws of war will permit. I propose that, if the Commander-in-chief approve, this night be granted to these miserable men to arrange their worldly affairs, and that they suffer, as spies and traitors ought to suffer, at gun-fire in the morning."

"With all my heart," replied the President: "in which case, Captain Dobson, the charge of seeing the sentence carried into execution will devolve upon you; for I need not remind you that we have business in hand which will not permit our loitering here much longer. In the mean while, however, I must beg the favour of the Court to continue assembled, whilst I acquaint the General with its proceedings."

He rose as he spoke; but before he had ad-

vanced two paces towards the door, it flew open, and a man of middle stature, plainly dressed, and extremely corpulent, entered. The members of the Court stood up to receive him; and the stranger taking off his hat, displayed the bald and flat-crowned head, which gained for General Heath, in the ranks of the American army, the nickname of the 'Marquis of Granby.'

"Well met, Sir," exclaimed the President. "I was so far on my way to receive your judgment on the sentence which we have just pronounced. Both prisoners have been found guilty on the clearest testimony; and we adjudge them, in submission to your Excellency's approbation, to suffer death."

"I am sorry for it," replied the General: "I lament that more lives should fall a sacrifice to a system which I for one decidedly condemn; but I presume the evidence of their guilt admitted not of a question."

"Not of the slightest, Sir, I assure you," observed Captain Jonathan Dobson. "Our leaning has been, perhaps, too strongly towards the side of mercy; in proof of which, we humbly submit to your Excellency that the execution do not take place before to-morrow morning."

"Very well, gentlemen," answered Heath: "if there be foul play here, the guilt rests upon your heads, not upon mine. I confirm your finding, and leave you to direct the time of execution when you will. For the present, however, there are other matters to be attended to; and I must request that you repair immediately to your several corps, which are already in motion."

All made instant preparations to obey. "But what shall we do with the prisoners?" asked the staff officer. "Are they to be removed to the rear? or shall they suffer on the spot where their crimes have been perpetrated?"

"Let them die here," answered the General. "And harkye, Captain Dobson, I know that such affairs cannot be trusted to more willing hands than yours. My orders are, that you remain where you are, with twenty men of your own troop, that you guard the prisoners carefully during the night, and see the sentence carried into execution at early dawn; after which, I expect that you will rejoin me at Peekskill, where, by midnight at the latest, we shall be again assembled. The rest of you, gentlemen, to your commands; we have much to do between that time and this, and time wears on apace."

The General's address was followed by an immediate breaking up of the Court-martial. Leaving Captain Dobson to act the part assigned to him, the other members hurried off each to his proper station; and in five minutes after, the garrison in possession of Belmont consisted only of the Skinner chief and his twenty followers. The remainder, assembling on the paddock in front of the house, began their march after the column, which had already regained the high road; and a perfect silence prevailed from one extremity of the vale to the other.

It was now, for the first time since he took shelter in his uneasy prison, that Davis Morgan ventured to look out. The hall was empty, twilight too was rapidly verging into night, and he felt that if the lives of his father and Harry Beckwith were to be preserved at all, to his exertions alone would their preservation be owing. He stole softly from his hiding-place; he opened the hall-door, looked round him, and observed that not so much as a sentinel was planted to guard against accident. Davis was a youth of no ordinary decision and presence of mind. General Heath's instructions were not lost upon him, nor

was he slow in conjecturing, that could he succeed in reaching the British lines, even yet something might be effected: he therefore set off, by a circuitous and unfrequented route, to Kingsbridge. Davis hung upon the left flank of the American line during the continuance of that affair, of which an account has already been given. He perceived at a glance, that no serious design was entertained of forcing the post of Kingsbridge; for the countermarch of the enemy's column, almost as soon as the firing began, was not lost upon him; and he was deterred from forcing his way through the skirmishers only by the conviction, that should he even succeed, it would be impossible, at that juncture of affairs, to effect the object which he was alone desirous to effect. He accordingly lay concealed in a sort of drain or sunk fence, till the American tirailleurs began to fall back; and he never quitted it till he had satisfactorily ascertained that they were in full retreat after their main body. This done, he advanced boldly upon the British outposts. He was challenged, as a matter of course,—answered readily to the challenge; and convincing the sentry that he was alone, received permission

to approach. You need not be told of what followed. The Sergeant of the guard was called, by whom he was led back to the station of the picket, to the officer in command of which he made known his desire of seeing Captain Beckwith; and as the youth spoke like one deeply interested in what he said, no time was lost in gratifying his wishes. Of the manner of his introduction to Oliver, and of the nature of his appeal, you are already aware.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

ERRATA.

page 6, line 2, *for* 'hook,' *read* 'book.'
45, 6 from bottom, *for* 'excited,' *read* 'exerted.'
70, 8 from bottom, *for* 'birth,' *read* 'berth.'
81, 5, *for* 'Scavem, *read* 'Sacavem.'
162, 3, *dele* 'I' *before* 'departed.'
163, 7, *for* 'from,' *read* 'upon.'

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